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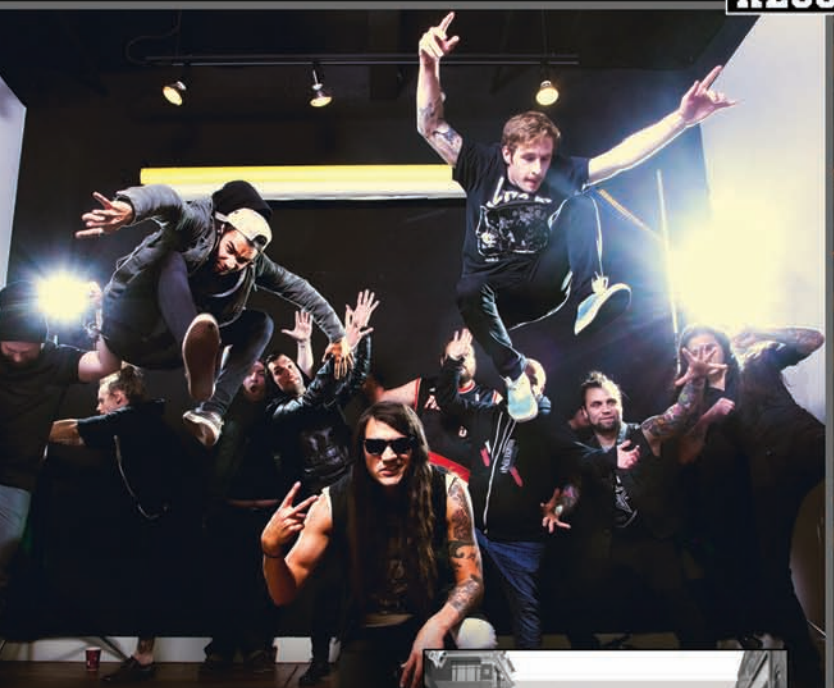

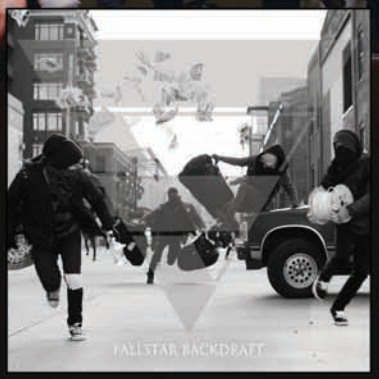

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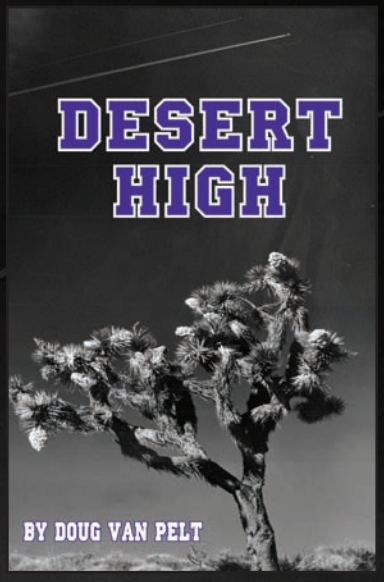

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HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

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From the assistant editor

Rob Shameless

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

Four days ago a friend of my posted this video clip (http://youtu.be/ML3qYHWRIZk) from the end of the opening scene to the first episode to HBO's show *The Newsroom*. This show revolves around Jeff Daniels' character Will McAvoy and his newsroom staff. Will McAvoy is a registered Republican news anchor that has come to a crossroads: entertaining his audience or giving them real news and not following the trends of the other networks. I see McAvoy's new way of presenting the news as a mix of Doug and myself. He wants the American public to know real news. I believe Doug and myself want to do the same thing. Covering bands that we believe in that are doing it for the right reasons. There may be some bands that we cover or things we do that some of you may say that we are not Christians anymore. We are not here to cater to close-minded people. We are here to open minds through the music of open-minded people. This does not mean that we are going to start covering bands that do not have belief in Jesus. (Well, besides our So & So Says interviews. We still want to interview Marilyn Manson.) I know you are going to say that we are not Christians and we are going to stop using HM to reach the lost or be an outlet to the newly converted. You have misread this. We want to bring the truth even if the truth hurts your close-minded view of Christianity and "Christian metal and hardcore." Like Will McAvoy said, "the USA is not the greatest country in the world." I am going to bust your bubble now. For Today and TDWP are not the best Christian bands out right now. There are so many bands that you have never heard that are way more amazing than you will ever know. The only reason they don't get big is that the 14-26 demographic will buy whatever *Alternative Press* writes about that is a "Christian" band. We have been guilty of it as well. I will throw us under the bus, too. I want to cover bands that are not popular and that are amazing at what they do. There are a lot of crappy bands out there. We have all seen the crappy youtube videos they post, the logos and band names they give themselves. Indievisionmusic.com does a great job at finding hidden treasures. I hope that in 2013 HM will do the same. We may or may not get to cover this band in this issue, so go listen to them now while you read this great issue. The band is called New Waters. They are a real metalcore band in the veins of two great secular bands – Converge and Trap Them. So, if you are fasting from secular music for Lent give them a listen (bloodandink.bandcamp.com/album/lions-ep). That is why I picked Hope For The Dying for the cover. They are a band I think more people should know about. They create some of the best metal I think I will hear all year. They could hold their own to bands like Dream Theater or any other epic metal band. I hope to put the spotlight on some other hard working bands that do not get the credit they are due.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

FOR TODAY	*Prevailer*	Fast metal drives for repeats, as do the lyrics of hope.
RED	*Release the Panic*	Hard music done right. I wanna hear this one live.
CITIZENS	*Self-Titled*	Collette is right. This album is compelling worship.
LOVE AND DEATH	*Between Here and...*	Yeah, whip it good!
ONWARD TO OLY...	*Indicator*	All indicators point to a great album.
DEMON HUNTER	*True Defiance*	Just killer.
KLANK	*Urban Warfare*	Guitar-heavy industrial metal.
BLACKHOUSE	*various...*	Weird and eclectic industrial noise band.

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Letters to the Edit

CONTROVERSY STRIKES AGAIN

Hey HM Magazine, what's with the post "Inappropriate Movie Giveaway?" Giving away several copies of *This is 40*? I was very disappointed and shocked when I saw the post. Why are you promoting a sinful film? Your comment, "HM is crazy and unafraid to rock the boat." What does that even mean? This movie encourages sin, promotes sin and is full of sin. I haven't seen it, however I looked it up and found out there is nearly 100 f-words, countless sexual scenes, sexual references. "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5); "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." (Mark 9:42). It seems like you want to act radical (shake the "Christian" boat). By promoting a sinful film? What!? When we trust Christ we become DEAD to SIN & ALIVE in CHRIST. We don't just continue talking, acting the same as the world. We become transformed through Christ. Christ lives inside of us! Our old nature of sin is dead at the cross. We have a new life with Christ. I would seriously reconsider what you posted. Are you going to live 100% for Jesus Christ or no? There is no sitting on the fence. I know my comments seem very harsh. However, as a brother in Christ. I had to say something. Your magazine has a huge impact on kids. Don't compromise like the rest of the world.
Yours sincerely,
–HM Magazine Fan, via email

What. Are. You. Doing? Doug, we need to talk...
–Tom Geswein, via website

Ed – I appreciate your concerns and might agree with all of them after I see the film. Neither of us have watched it at this point, so let's wait and see. Thanks for continuing the discussion via email. I assure you that I was just thinking lightly of this and am not "trying to be radical." I think publishing a metal magazine is radical enough and I'm not really trying to get my silly ego stroked. I was approached about giving away the DVDs and didn't think much of it. I'll evaluate the decision more later.

DISCOVERY LOVE

So glad I found you guys online! Love the mag.
–Daniel Chairet, via website

Hi Doug, I am on the Playgroup here in Lago. I just checked out your magazine. Don't know why I didn't in the past. I am a huge Christian music rock fan and loved it! I honestly wish more people would give Christian music a chance. I hardly ever listen to secular music these days. Anyway, your magazine provided some new bands for me to explore. I am always looking for new stuff.
–Melissa Ginther, via email

HM is a great source to find out about Christian music that rocks. Also a great place to find out what secular bands believe and what they have to say. Thank you HM for the many years of satisfying news and entertainment!
–Jota Hockmuth, via website

Ed – Thanks for all the encouragement, brothers and sister!

WORSHIP AT FULL VOLUME '05 T

Yes, please reprint this shirt.
–Emanuel, via website

Ed – Appreciate the feedback. I was about to reprint it with a larger design, but opted instead for the new skeleton shirt. I'll still reprint this Worship At Full Volume 2005 shirt (featuring Adam from Mortal Treason on his face) one of these days ... soon.

PROVE THAT PEOPLE WIN

Can you start posting the name of the person who wins the weekly enewsletter Trivia Contests? Sometimes I wonder if anyone wins, since we never know.
–Debbie Goodman, via website

Ed – I'm very sorry, I'm just not going to do that, because then I'd have to pick winners each week prior to the next enewsletter going out and that's proven to be one too many tasks for my workload. Instead I let the contests pile up over time and pick a bunch of winners for each enewsletter about once a month and then send the prizes out. I wish I could, but I have to manage my time wisely and choose not to do certain good things in favor of the larger whole.

FREE PDF OF FEB ISSUE

Best idea ever. HM needs a mobile app with links to all the advertised sites, so we can easily read the magazine, check out advertisers, bands, videos, music, etc.
–Scott Steele, via website

Ed – Hey old friend! I have some good news on that front. We have finally secured an app version for HM, starting with the February issue and now the March one, too. They'll be on sale in the iTunes store for $1.99 per issue and also available for Android, Windows and Google platforms. Plans are for Blackberry down the road, too.

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it ... Let the desert and its towns raise their voices ... Let them give glory to the Lord and proclaim His praise in the islands." (Isaiah 42:10, 11, 12)

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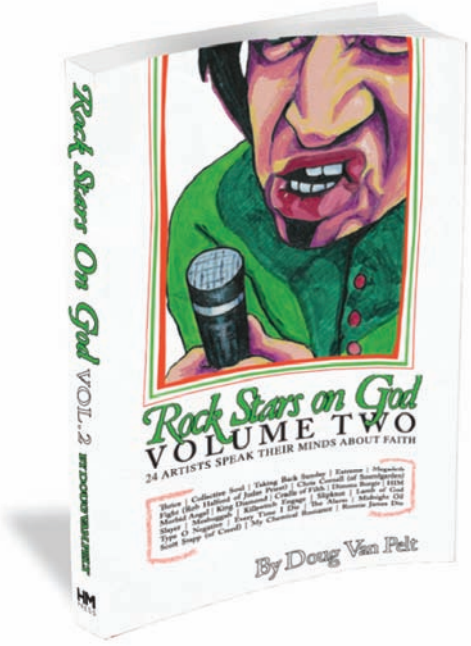

Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

Thrice, Collective Soul, Taking Back Sunday, Extreme, Megadeth, Fight (Rob Halford, Judas Priest), Chris Cornell (Soundgarden), Morbid Angel, King Diamond, Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, HIM, Slayer, Meshuggah, Killswitch Engage, Slipknot, Lamb of God, Type O Negative, Every Time I Die, The Alarm, Midnight Oil, Scott Stapp (Creed), My Chemical Romance, Ronnie James Dio.

HM PRESS

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LIVE REPORT

Underoath's final tour

January 22

REVIEW and PHOTOS BY ROB SHAMELESS

(Dallas, TX) On a chilly Texas night in January, As Cities Burn, mewithoutYou and Underoath came to The House of Blues in Dallas for one final night to celebrate the end of Underoath.

My night was aggravating in the start. Being the same size as a hobbit or a troll, I could not see over the people, so watching As Cities Burn's first part of their set was frustrating. Then the guy who was running the VIP section let me sit there for free. So, I finally had a good seat to watch the rest of the show. **As Cities Burn** was great. They were way better then when I saw them two years ago at Unsilent Night. Though being a band again for two years and practicing more than a few times in two months can do that.

It had been three years since I saw my friends in **mewithoutYou**. This was the first time seeing them play new songs off of their latest album, *Ten Stories*. They opened with "January 1979" and then went into "February 1878." They played all their hits from their past four records. It was amazing to watch them play such a big venue. I had only seen them play the Door in Dallas, which holds half of what the House of Blues does. So, this was a great treat.

After about 20 minutes after mewithoutYou finished, **Underoath** took the stage. I had only seen them once before. For a farewell show, they pulled out all the stops. They had a movie that played behind them that I am guessing Daniel Davison made. I think I watched that more than I watched the band perform. I know they played all the hits since Spencer took over on vocals. Which is a sad thing, because "The Sun Still Sleeps" is what got a lot of fans my age to like them; then some of us started going back and started listening to albums like *Cries of Past*. So, any old school Underoath fan that stopped listening after *They Are Only Chasing Safety* most likely did not have a good time. All the people in their mid-twenties that where teens ten years ago and thought that Underoath where gods among men where practically in Heaven that night. I heard Aaron Gillespie did play drums at the last show in Florida. I would have liked to see my friend Dallas Taylor do some vocals, seeing how I never got to see that era of the band. I never will get to see it ... or maybe? Who knows? Judge and Black Flag are playing shows. So, in ten years or so we may see that.

Matt Thiessen of Relient K
(Photo: Doug Van Pelt)

Christian Liljegren of Golden Resurrection
(Photo: Andre Karjel)

Tim Lambesis
of As I Lay Dying

THOSE WHO FEAR

Facedown Records has added Pittsburgh, PA's hardcore band, Those Who Fear, to its lush roster of heavy metal acts. The group's full-length Facedown debut, *Unholy Anger*, is the follow-up to their first effort, 2011's *Legacy* EP.

The songs on *Unholy Anger* are being road tested while Those Who Fear perform around the U.S., playing heavy music with a message of depth and weight. And truth. The message, according to bassist Josh Zeigler, is as vital as the sound he and his bandmates give to their audiences.

"Being in a band is easy. If you play a show to 300 kids, I bet 150 of them are in bands. Everyone plays music. It's fun. It's a good hobby. But, for me, if you're not saying something – if you're not giving a message and you don't have anything to say – to me that's sort of pointless. If our message wasn't what it was, I wouldn't be in a band. I wouldn't tour at all.

"In the hardcore/metal genre it's all really been done before," Ziegler says. "You have to find a way to add your own taste to it as far as the music goes. We try to the best of our ability set ourselves apart in that way. The music part is the hard part for us. The message, though, is not hard. We live and breathe our message. When we write lyrics – that part is so natural to us."

Ziegler, who has been in TWF for a year and a half, says he has been heavily influenced by old school hardcore bands. "Agnostic Front is probably my favorite old school hardcore metal band. Madball, too. We actually wanted to get Freddy [Cricien] Madball on our record really bad. We just didn't have the time. I really hope next time around that we can get that guy, because he's a really big influence on our band – especially for me and our vocalist. We really love Madball. Roger Miret (Agnostic Front) is also another big influence for us. We love those bands.

"There's no beating around the bush as far as our content," says Ziegler about the new album. "The song "Unholy Anger" has a lot to do with our vocalist, John Healy. He's struggled with really bad anger issues. He really spilled it all out in that song. The first half of the song he's talking about dealing with that rage and that distaste he has for everybody. It sort of comes full circle toward the end in how Jesus really helped him ease that pain and that rage he had all the time."

Along with vocalist John Healy and guitarist Luke Healy, Ziegler made a significant contribution to the lyrical content of *Unholy Anger*. "I helped write, I'd say 50 percent of the lyrics on the record, because there's stuff I feel like I'm being led to talk about. We feel like we've evolved to this. It's a completely different sound than *Legacy* as far as tempo. The energy has stepped up a lot, so we wanted to push it that way. *Legacy* was cool, but this record – the full-length – really captures what we've wanted to do and we couldn't do with the members we had at that time."

Ziegler says that the road is "honest" and has made him a better performer.

"We've been a band for six years and we've worked hard for everything we got. We've built a strong following based on us just being honest, genuine people who aren't out for just themselves. We like to make sure the kids are having a good time. We want to be in their faces."

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

CITIZENS

I'm a purist. I believe in hardcore for hardcore's sake. So when I was given the task of interviewing a worship band, Citizens, my mind immediately took me back to Sunday mornings. Sitting on a hard wooden pew through seemingly endless worship song sessions in my father's church. That was the first and only opinion I had formed about worship music. Nevertheless, I spoke to Citizens frontman Deacon Zach Bolen hoping to get some honest answers. I did indeed. Citizens taught me to love worship music for the first time in my life. Allow me to elaborate.

Why did you choose to sing this type of music?
We are all immersed in the Seattle culture in general [and] we see a great opportunity to influence the music culture here. Not to demonize it, but we have an opportunity to share our view. We are going to proclaim it and trust Jesus to do something through it. We are more on the indie pop side of things and we all bring in different kinds of styles. We are not trying to sound like other worship music; we are trying to be the antitheses of those. Also, we see that people are not into worship music or how people are turned off by it, but our focus is that guy who is banging a hammer all day being able to come into church and participate without feeling like he has been forced into doing so. We are just singing theology, just singing the Bible; and that has more power than just writing some catchy yarn.

Will you be touring?
Our local church is where we feel called and that is our priority. Opportunities will arise, but ultimately our purpose is the church and we are here to serve the people of the church. I am the worship director at Mars Hill, but others are volunteering their time there because they want to serve. We are all thankful for the opportunity to serve anywhere, but our main focus is just staying local.

What needs to be said about Citizens?
I think the big thing is the emphasis on the local church. Our mission is not to boost ourselves up above anyone else or above other Christian bands or worship bands. We want to make a difference locally. When we say local church, we mean the church in general, not just Mars Hill. If the church is proclaiming the Gospel, we have that in common and Citizens wants to support our community and unify people around the Gospel in a way that is creative and that causes people who wouldn't normally listen to worship music to pay attention.

So, Citizens has a heart for God and a desire to help the lost. Deacon Zach was honest, open and patient with me and my elementary line of questioning. Furthermore, as I listened to their tracks repeatedly I discovered that something was happening in my soul. I learned that worship music is like a spiritual type of magic. It sticks to your heart and becomes a part of your life. The comforting words fill your spirit when you play them in your home, sing them in your car, store them in your heart. This pure form of praise repels attacks from the enemy, lifts the lowest heart and lights the darkest of days. What's not to love? The debut album (Mars Hill Music with Tooth and Nail Records) will be released March 12th. Be sure to pick it up – and let it pick you up.

BY COLLETTE WYCOFF COLLINS

FIT FOR

WITH EVERY GENERATION COMES A FAD. IT BECAME COOL AT A TIME IN HISTORY TO WEAR A LEATHER JACKET WITH CHUCK TAYLOR ALL STARS, WHILE OTHERS ROCKED THEIR HIGH SCHOOL TEAM JOCKEY JACKETS. ANOTHER FAD WAS PROMOTING WORLD PEACE AND WEARING FLOWERS AS HAIR DECORATION, WHILE SOCIETY TOLD YOU TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL IN THE UPCOMING BUSINESS AND POLITICAL WORLD. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, EXPLORING THE WORLD OF HEAVY MUSIC WHILE OTHERS THOUGHT IT WAS ABSOLUTE NOISE. IT HAS BECOME TOTALLY CLEAR THAT HEAVY MUSIC IS GOING NOWHERE FAST, ESPECIALLY IN THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY.

Solid State Records has been known for a good number of legendary metal bands. These include some familiar names such as Zao, Living Sacrifice, Extol, Spitfire and Overcome. One listen to Fit For A King and it will hard to disagree that Solid State has signed one of its "meanest" sounding bands as of yet. At times the vocals of Ryan Kirby sound similar to Phil Bozeman of Whitechapel. The low-tuned guitars reign down fire with breakdowns that are hard to ignore and aren't typical.

FFAK has been together since September of 2007 and hail from Tyler, Texas. However, four members of FFAK were in a previous local band named Rewind the Sunrise. It was then that they asked their friend Jared Easterling, drummer, to join their new project. A project with no particular meaning behind the name. "Our original guitar player, Mason Wilson, found the saying in the Bible," said Easterling. "It caught his eye in 2nd Samuel. He said there was no real meaning behind the name. The rest of the group agreed after it being shown to them."

FFAK's debut album, *Creation Destruction*, will be released March 12. This is only the beginning of their journey and the mindset is to give people a positive message in the genre that has been painted with too many negative brushes. This is the genre that at first made parents fear their kids would fall into partying, rebellion, Satanism and any other things fitted into a troubled generation.

"We had been writing the new record for awhile before we were even signed," said Vocalist Ryan Kirby. "It really all came full circle after we became signed and had a slew of ideas before hitting the studio. It was great working with Andreas Magnusson (The Black Dahlia Murder, The Famine, Despised Icon). He had a ton of great ideas and he understood our vision for this record. Putting the tracks in the studio was nuts. This was the nicest place I had ever recorded, before that it was a bedroom. A challenge we definitely faced was organizing our time correctly in the studio. We had never had experience with a legit studio. Living there and waking up to record every day for a month took some getting used to."

It's pretty common to find a band that believes in Jesus Christ and expresses that through harsh vocals and breakdowns in their music. In the beginning of the scene, Christianity mixing with a genre labeled as "devil music" was heavily frowned upon. Numerous debating went on and still continues today. Now it's hard to shy away from this powerful movement. It's become so powerful that at times it's easy to lose

A KING

focus of the message being portrayed. Many bands have written lyrics that only give praise to God and God alone. There have also been "Christ influenced" bands that have added their own personal opinions about their faith. When it comes to musical structure, breakdowns, blastbeats, harsh and clean vocals are nothing new. However, it's not about what a band includes in their writing, but how it is used.

"I believe there are a few things that set us apart," said Kirby. "First of them being our diversity and structuring. I know that sounds funny, considering all the breakdowns. But there are meanings behind each heavy part. It's never just a random breakdown, it flows. Second, we believe we have some unique sounding vocals for the genre. We feel like we do well including singing, even though some may disagree with signing in music as heavy as ours. Lastly, our lyrics. We take a lot of time writing meaningful lyrics. Almost as much time as writing the actual music. We feel like meaningful lyrics are becoming more and more uncommon with the way metalcore is going."

"We are a Christian band, so a lot of our lyrics deal with that. But what needs to be understood is that *Creation Destruction* isn't an album worshipping God, per-say. It's about real life situations and how God has helped me through them. A couple of songs are stories, involving the struggle of good and evil ('The Lioness and Hollow King')."

FFAK are excited and honored to be a part of the Solid State family. Being great admirers of Haste The Day and Underoath, they have no reason not to be. Each member of FFAK enjoy soft vocals in their music and this helped to create positive leverage. While Kirby tries to follow vocal patterns of Linkin Park, guitarist Bob Lynge enjoys the riffs of Slipknot and The Acacia Strain.

With this new record, plenty of touring is being put together. The band looks forward to having a good time and getting to witness to new fans on the road. However, Kirby says that staying healthy will be a challenge due to getting sick easily.

"My dream tour would have to Underoath, As I Lay Dying and 30 Seconds To Mars," said Kirby. "I absolutely love each of those bands. It would be a dream. Especially considering Underoath broke up. Don't hesitate to talk to us on tour! Thanks to everyone who listened to us online or at a show. We love meeting all our listeners."

✖

BY DANIEL GARCIA

RISING FROM THE ASHES, GREELEY ESTATES BEGINS A NEW JOURNEY.

After a decade of memories and experiences, Greeley Estates has decided to come full circle and get back to their roots. Deciding to record and write as a band in Ryan's house, paying for their own music, merchandise with no label backing them, outlasting some of the genre's top bands and pushing forward, Greeley Estates has escaped the clutches of defeat and decided to go on their own. I spoke with frontman Ryan Zimmerman about the process of the band, the album, and their state of mind.

"Going into the last record, we were not really sure what was next. If it was do the same routine of putting out records on the label and touring and barely making money to get by. Especially when it is all about the hottest, youngest new band around. We knew that getting into it. But now we have experience, and we have friends and fans that have been with us through the years, wondering if we can get by and just do it. We didn't all agree to break up, but we all knew it in our heads. Every record is the closing of a chapter. We go into each record thinking it could be our last. That is why each record has a different feel to them. Going into *The Death of Greeley Estates*, we did feel it was the last one."

Ryan describes the feelings of what it is like for him and the band (to be) in the clutches of defeat. He explains the thought process, and (the band) needing to be smarter, having a lack of motivation, and losing touch with what it meant to be a band. The band decided to get back to their roots from when they just started out.

"We were very hands on, especially with our fans on Pure Volume, Myspace, and trying to push our music and respond to the fans. When we were on Warner Brothers and Tragic Hero we just got lost in it. With people doing things for you, and lots of bad luck with accidents over the years, and the difficulty of selling records now. We wanted to see if we could work hard together and see if our fans will support us."

The changing of the industry and the rapid changing of social media has pushed bands to break. Greeley Estates is a band that was around during the beginning of the social media rise, and is very aware of its importance. They also were around before songs could be purchased for a dollar off iTunes. Ryan describes the difference between the times of now and then.

"I let the music speak to me. I have been doing it since *Go West*, and this record is a little different. We all moved into my house and did pre-production together. There has been times where we were all in the studio writing together or in our RV or tour bus, but never living together in a house like that. I feel like this album has a little more direction than some of the other ones have. Bouncing tracks and lyrics off each other was a cool experience for this album.

"I think we are going to be independent as long as Greeley Estates is around. We are currently working on finishing up the 2nd half of the record – *The Devil's Son* EP. We've got a few music videos coming up this week. It is really nice, being able to focus on putting out a good product and plan out what we want to do with this album cycle. We recorded most of our records here in Phoenix, but this time we actually decided to do it all in-house. Pretty much all of the vocals were recorded here in my house in Phoenix."

"When we got into the scene there were different bands on a single show. There was this awesome scene, where you can have Job For A Cowboy, A Change of Pace, Blessthefall, and Scary Kids Scaring Kids. Kids would stay for all seven bands from start to finish regardless of which band they came to see. Now with the digital age everything has changed. Fans listen to what their friends tell them to, and will show up to a show for only one or two bands and leave. Once we know that no one cares, then we will know it will be time stop."

With all the focus on the new EP and the follow-up, no tours are planned. The band has decided that independent is the way to go from now on, and be more hands-on and to make things more personal. But that doesn't mean they are afraid of taking chances. Ryan talks about how the new EP will be different and hints at what is to come.

"The new EP will be a different approach then *The Narrow Road*. It will be different. We are looking to have it out soon. We are curious about the old school fans from *Far From The Lies* days of what they will think, because it will be more old Greeley and not new Greeley. Nothing like the *Narrow Road*, it is a little bit more risky. "

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BY TONY D. BRYANT

HM MAGAZINE BREAKS UP

Why the hard music magazine dream has passed on, as told by founder Doug Van Pelt.

LAGO VISTA, TX

In a resort city outside of Austin, nestled in the beautiful hill country of Central Texas, lies a small business that defied the odds for 28 years. A magazine covering the Christian "hard music scene" (encapsulating metal, alternative, punk and all forms of rock) was never suppposed to become anything more than a small fanzine – proportionate to the small underground scene it was covering. But something else happened. It grew. And grew...

"I started HM Magazine with a finished product in mind. I always saw it as a full-fledged magazine that sat alongside its peers on the magazine rack." It's ironic that 1985 saw the launching of four music magazines – Spin, Alternative Press, Metal Edge, and Heaven's Metal Magazine. Metal Edge bit the dust a few years ago and HM (fka Heaven's Metal) is choosing to follow.

Why this choice? Why now?

Your intrepid reporter (quoting himself as if he were reviewing his own band's demo cassette in 1988 – guilty as charged, though he slammed his own vocal performance in some form of mock criticism – maybe an advance apology to his audience's ears?) is on task to find out and report the facts.

"I started HM Magazine to serve a two-fold purpose: to serve the fans, who needed and wanted information; and to serve the artists, who needed exposure."

No problem. A good businessman (and even a good disciple) sees a need and meets it. Check.

"I threw every ounce of myself into it to make it fly."

This is called hard work, determination and steadfastness. Check.

"I was able to live a dream. I saw my dream come true. I'm a blessed man. And I can't go on without stating that I had a lot of help from a lot of people along the way."

We're all glad to hear that, before this turns into a puff piece.

"I had graphic artists volunteer to draft new logos and cover designs. I had labels trading the privilege of having their band on the cover for the work of their design team to craft world-class color covers. I had staff members and even interns who took our business, our brand and our quality of journalism up several notches. I had a wife and even two children that gladly jumped in and helped see the dream live on and expand."

This is all good. And it's especially good to be grounded in thanksgiving. No offense to Obama's critics (which if polled probably make up at least 75% of our audience), the notion that teamwork builds dreams is a valid one. While my ego would love to see a statue built in my honor (I won't lie, even though it proves I've got pride), it wouldn't be right to shine the spotlight on just one person. HM has been a team effort since day one.

"I was able to serve the body of Christ with this magazine. And along with believers, provide a common interest, some good reading, some good design and some good journalism to anyone that liked hard music and all of its subsidiaries.

"I wanted to be a hero. Not for the accolades or the praise of man, but the praise of One. I believe (and I'll say this about ANYONE reading this article) that the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead – the same Spirit that endowed and equipped Moses, Abraham, Elijah, David, John, James, Peter and Paul – this Spirit resides in me. Therefore, I have the potential to be a hero of the faith. I have the potential to change the world. Why? Because of God. If I volunteer for the job of being obedient to Him, apply myself to what I have before me and work with all my might, great things might happen."

So far, so good. So what?

"I was consumed by my dream."

Uh-oh. Problem.

"Throwing myself into my business, my dream, my ministry and probably my favorite hobby was a fulfilling thing. But in my efforts to be some sort of super hero for God, I became a super villain to my family."

When you hurt the ones you love, it's bad. But the problem with a true statement like this is that it can turn into blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. Get my point?

"I was in denial of what I was doing. I knew there was a balance and I thought for sure I was keeping it. Maybe I didn't listen to the right 'accountability partners.' Maybe I said the right things and made it harder for someone close to tell me the truth.

"I remember thinking how resentful I would be if I gave up my dream just for the simple romantic notion that it was the right thing to do. 'All that work to toss aside for someone's misled feelings?' I believed that I would drop what I was doing in a heartbeat if God called me to let it go. I rely on discernment and common sense to keep myself from being led astray by a popular doctrine or fleeting philosophy, so I sometimes demand for tough, hard evidence and a clearcut case if I'm going to do something unusual. I'm willing to be thought a fool for God, but I might be skeptical if it's asking for large-scale sacrifice and change.

"The trouble is I didn't listen to the single most person in my life that had the information, experience and upclose opportunity to see if I was really walking in balance or out of it. This person is my wife. My daughters are right there, too. My indifference to their complaints about me not spending time with them, about putting HM above my family and a being 'checked out' even when I was at home with everyone – these are things I should have taken notice of.

"People can be fragile. I've broken the members of my family. God can heal. God can fix. I hope He does. I will work with the same kind of dedication and effort (i.e. all of me) I have put into HM towards this higher calling.

"My life will never be the same. I've run the race. I've done some things well, but I've commited some penalties. I put HM ahead of the Van Pelt family. How could I? Oh, Father in heaven, please forgive me."

It is done. Forgiveness is granted.

"I'm walking away from HM, though. You might guess what my motives for sacrificing this business, this ministry, this media entity are – and you might even be right – but even if nothing is gained by this death, burial (or potential sale and transfer), I will have stopped contributing to the machine I created. Even though this machine was created to serve, it has hurt the ones I love. Now I get to remove myself from that. I get to walk in a confience that I will no longer harm my family any more.

"These are my reasons. This is my story. And I hope someone can learn from my lesson, my failure.

I'm listening. Are you?

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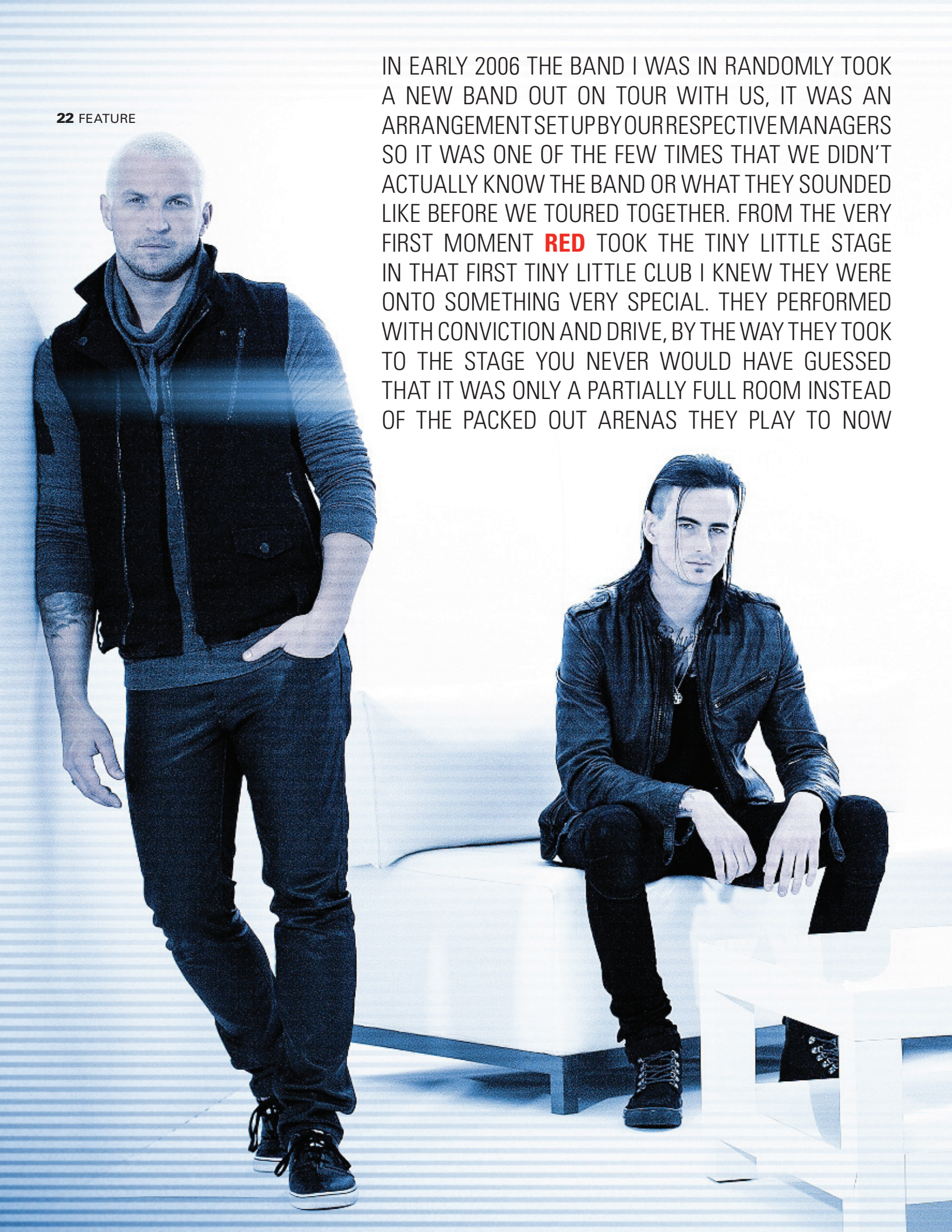
IN EARLY 2006 THE BAND I WAS IN RANDOMLY TOOK A NEW BAND OUT ON TOUR WITH US, IT WAS AN ARRANGEMENT SET UP BY OUR RESPECTIVE MANAGERS SO IT WAS ONE OF THE FEW TIMES THAT WE DIDN'T ACTUALLY KNOW THE BAND OR WHAT THEY SOUNDED LIKE BEFORE WE TOURED TOGETHER. FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT **RED** TOOK THE TINY LITTLE STAGE IN THAT FIRST TINY LITTLE CLUB I KNEW THEY WERE ONTO SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL. THEY PERFORMED WITH CONVICTION AND DRIVE, BY THE WAY THEY TOOK TO THE STAGE YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT IT WAS ONLY A PARTIALLY FULL ROOM INSTEAD OF THE PACKED OUT ARENAS THEY PLAY TO NOW



ON THE PAST FEW *WINTER JAM TOUR* SPECTACULARS. LATER THAT YEAR AT THE THEN ANNUAL GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION WEEK IN NASHVILLE, TN, DOUG (THE ILLUSTRIOUS EDITOR OF THE FINE MAGAZINE YOU'RE NOW READING) RANDOMLY ASKED ME WHO I THOUGHT WAS GOING TO BE THE NEXT "BIG" THING. WITHOUT HESITATION I TOLD HIM RED. AND NOW IT LOOKS AS THOUGH I ACTUALLY GOT THAT ONE RIGHT.

BY JEF CUNNINGHAM & DOUG VAN PELT

"We don't have a problem visiting the dark parts of our lives because it creates a palpable connection to others. We all love knowing that we share some sort of commonality even if it is negative."

Since I was first introduced to RED they've basically taken over the hard music side of the Christian music world, as well as becoming radio and touring mainstays in the overall general music market. The bands 4th album Release The Panic is RED doing what they do best, writing hard hitting mood laden songs speaking to the disenfranchised that there is hope, truth, and ultimately... love.

Thanks to a very ill-timed computer hiccup I wasn't able to actually do the interview I was originally assigned, so major props to Doug Van Pelt for conducting the following interview with guitarist Anthony Armstrong.

When Red began writing material for this new album, what was the collective mindset of the band?
We wanted something fresh, but still within the realm of what we are known for. We always want to write a record that we will enjoy performing and will translate, and be powerful live.

What was the writing/composing stage and the recording/studio stage like for *Release the Panic*?
A lot of work on the front end – as usual for us. We started writing a year and a half ago. It takes time to formulate exactly what (we feel) will translate how we are looking at the world.

Howard Benson has built a fine reputation over the past decade. I'm sure you might have had certain expectations, hopes and maybe fears in working with him. What was it like? What was *he* like? What will you take away from this experience ... and, if you had to self-produce your next album, what Howard-Benson-isms might you utilize on your own?
We had a lot of expectations about the process with Howard itself. We've only known how to work with one producer. This was an entirely new process and with that comes challenges – both big and small. Most importantly we wanted to know that Benson "got us." That he knew exactly what the project had to be in our eyes. One thing he said from the very beginning is that he wanted to make sure that this record was about us and all he was going to do is take our art and elevate it. He didn't want to inject himself too much into the whole process. The only real fear for us was not knowing how his process would affect us in the studio, but it couldn't have been a smoother ride. We really took away a lot from the process. Most of all that the efforts we put in on the front end before getting into the studio are crucial. That made the production that much more generative. I think if we were forced to make our own record, we would be more prepared to take it on because of the effort we put into every project. Howard also had a way of sifting through the most relevant parts of the demos and focusing more on "getting to the point" with each track.

Also, related, but specifically as a guitarist, what sort of attention to your guitar did Howard pay in the studio? How'd that go?
He made it clear that he is a vocal guy. He's a believer in great tone and the music has to be there, but he truly concentrates on the vocals. He knows his strengths, so he hires other pros to record the areas of a record that he wouldn't necessarily be top notch at. It's like a basketball team. Not every guy on the team is on the floor, because they all have the same strengths. Some guys are shooters where others are ball handlers and so on. That's his approach. Why impede the process and slow things down by trying to do it all when he can have one of the best teams around help him to make a world-class record. It's the sum of the parts, not the parts by themselves.

Your aggressive music and lyrics deliver a good one-two punch (a good team effort combining the two) in addressing the disenfranchised, the hurting ... and you bring a hope to the discussion. Where does this experience, this background come from? What kind of pain have you guys collectively or individually gone through? What sort of suffering have you taken on (so to speak) from your audience or people you've met, friends you have, etc?
We are all living in this world. It's no lie that we have all experienced hardships and trails without going into a lot of detail. It's easy for us to walk into the darkest from time to time, and acquire redemption on our way back out again. That is the mark of our music. We don't have a problem visiting the dark parts of our lives, because it creates a palpable connection to others. We all love knowing that we share some sort of commonality – even if it is negative.

I've long held a theory that "Christian rock" (a tag not a lot of people really love) has more of a role that is "pastoral" vs. "evangelism." In other words, it helps its audience endure, find hope and carry on in spite of pain than it does introduce people to the salvation that comes

from Jesus (though it does that, too). I don't want to be the writer that says, "This is what I think, don't you agree with me?" kind of self-important drivel, so feel free to take this question any direction you'd like to go in... How do you feel about your role with your audience and the diverse group of people that will hear your music?
We aren't GOD. We are just a group of dudes that choose grace. Only he can lead us to salvation.

"Christian" music has a way of being trite. A lot of it is geared towards both sides – whether it is pastoral or evangelical. We believe our job as believers, who compose music, is to be objective. That's just our opinion. Music has its own way of being literal, so we don't have to. If you distort, what the music itself is capable of on its own with lyrics that promote an overwhelming agenda, than you delude its power to reach you where you are, not where the author is or was at the time.

The song "Damage." How do you escape or find resolution to the condition that is described there? "All I do is damage..." and "I am covered in shame..." ??
That can be a tough question to answer. Where's the resolution? Ultimately we have found GOD to be the resolve. People who find themselves doing serious damage will have to first come to terms with the fact that it's not the only thing they are capable of. The song has a tendency to wallow, but true character and or faith is finding a way to repair the damage.

What are your plans to add visual to the songs and themes of this album as you tour this? How important and why is the visual part of your show? (You covered this a little in our last album interview, but I know that sometimes changes are made on the live show from album to album)
I believe that there is much more to music than just lyrics. All of us formulate pictures in our mind that we entrance ourselves with when we listen. RED is known for creating that environment live with each record cycle. The visual for this record is simply fear and confusion. We can promise that we will make sure that this is the environment that you see, but won't be the environment that you live in at a RED show. It will be intense, but ultimately empowering.

Some of the online criticism I read from an unsolicited and positive review we posted was kind of centered around the attitude of "I don't hear anything new," blah blah blah. I think sometimes online comments are ridiculous (about 80% of the time, actually) and I disagree. Both myself (editor) and the writer for the actual assigned review (which was also positive) both gave it a 4/5 rating. I'm not sure what people expect sometimes. I don't mind a band not "progressing" or going through massive change from album to album. I prefer a band to stick with what they're good at. I think there's plenty of room to grow and show diversity and creativity while still sticking true to a band's core identity. But, just for fun, possibly, let me give you a chance to answer the critics that might think that Red is "stuck in a rut" or "repeating themselves" with *Release the Panic*.
I think it's the opposite, really. It's not that we are repeating; it's, "Why didn't you make another record like your last three?"

Criticism comes in many forms for a band let alone a "Christian" band. A fan's perspective is extremely delicate. If it is challenged in any way, it's amazing how quick they are to jump on the preferable soapbox and make their opinion known. It's a theatre of war that's not worth entering. Some battles do get interesting, though. It's amazing what people think they know. When the dust settles, all we want to do is inspire people – not get into an argument about how the mix sounds, and why the snare sounds that way, or where's the Michael Barnes we used to love, or, "Wow, they have finally sold out and gone mainstream." Those types of questions/comments just don't make sense to us...

On the converse, how do you handle praise? Sometimes you've got to take what a fan says with a grain of salt. What's your take? What's your secret? What's your attitude in regards to praise from fans, etc?
Praise obviously feels great. Any band wants to know that they are making an impact with their respective music. There is no secret, really. Just take the good and the bad with a grain of salt.

What led to the three remixes on the Deluxe Edition of *Release the Panic*? Why those songs (from each of your previous 3 albums)?
Something fun, really. It's not like the original songs don't exist anymore (this has been argued). We thought it would be fun to maybe take a super slow song and make it drastically different – as well as a heavy song. "See what twist we could put on the original sound." As far as the "Breathe" remix, that was our first big single and we actually released the acoustic version on iTunes for a small window, but wanted to just remind most of our diehard fans of their first love ... you never forget that first love and for many it was "Breathe Into Me."

How much thought goes into slowing things down a bit, like the song "So Far Away?" It adds a dynamic change from the rest of your more uptempo material. I'm curious what kinds of thoughts, discussions go on about adding a song like that?
You can't live your life going 1000 miles an hour. It's too one-dimensional. It feels good to slow down and reflect. Our ballads are meant to do that very thing. It just adds a dynamic that couldn't exist if it were just heavy heavy heavy all the time. Our records are meant for more than that.

What are your hopes and goals and plans for 2013?
To continue touring and doing what we love – being inspirational!!

How do you manage to love and serve your families and the band?
By marrying the right women and making sure you nurture the time with family that you have when you have it. When it's time to tour, it's time to go to work. Technology has also saved so many musicians' relationships. They always know where we are and can see our faces whenever they want.

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hope for the dying: t

2008 Hope For The Dying was in our Pick of the Litter section. That same year Jason Dunn signed them to Strike First Records. His developer label to his main label Facedown Records. Hope For The Dying is one of the few straight metal bands Jason has signed over the years. Any time Jason signs a metal band you know there has to be something special about them. These guys do not follow the trends of what is popular. They stick to what they love and to not stray away from their love of metal. With two full length records under their belt. They locked themselves in a room and created a masterpiece of Spirit filled metal. Aletheia is the band's finest work to date. I had the chance to talking to Hope For The Dying's singer/keyboardist Josh Ditto. A working class computer repair/web developer with his own business. Took time to take with me between walk in customers and phone calls. We had a chance to talk about their new record. Recording and good eats in Kansas City with producer Joshua Barber. writing epic music and writing meaningful vocals.

Photo: Treena Ditto – Angelic Images Photography

The art of individuality

BY ROB SHAMELESS

"There are always outside influences that play into our writing ... so don't think that we don't care about what other music is "out there..." We just don't write to match any particular style."

For those who don't know who you guys are please state your name and what do you do in Hope For The Dying.
Josh Ditto: Vocals/Keys/Interview guy.

With a third record under your belt, what can us metalheads find in this record that we did not in the last?
I think you'll find that we've matured more in our songwriting, composition and overall ... we've found a way to work better together in putting an album together. Jack basically locked himself in his basement for 2 months to work on the music for this album, so I won't spoil it by revealing too much about it here. Just know that we worked hard, thought hard and wrote, in typical HFTD fashion, EXACTLY the type of music we enjoy playing. We didn't cater to trends, we didn't write to fit into a genre. We wrote what we wanted to. I, personally, can't wait to hear some feedback from our fans, for sure.

Why do you not care about trends? there are so many bands on Facedown that are the trend. They are able to go on tour in support of thier new release. Why is it that Hope for the dying is a band that gets overlooked and underappreciated?
Well, I never said I didn't care about trends. But we don't write music to cater to trends. We're not saying anything against bands who DO. However, it's not our style. We're more concerned about advancing our own skill and songwriting and, at the end of the day, feeling truly satisfied with what we've written. That being said, there are always outside influences that play into our writing ... so don't think that we don't care about what other music is "out there..." We just don't write to match any particular style. I'm not really sure what "being a trend" has to do with going on tour and supporting a release. I'm very happy with the success of *Dissimulation* and HFTD only played three shows total in 2012 to attribute to that. That to me says that touring is not always directly responsible for the success of any given record ... the music written and the fans are. Granted, we toured more and played the summer festival circuit in 2011 to support *Dissimulation*'s release as well. That doesn't go to say we are NOT touring to support *Aletheia*, I think you'll find we are just being a bit more "choosy" about where we go and how long we stay out. Expect to see us on the road in late June/early July. More details on that soon! As far as being "overlooked..." I won't say that I really feel that we have. It's no secret that we play a style of music that isn't every person's "cup of tea." It's definitely easy to feel underappreciated from time to time, but for the most part we are super stoked with EVERY single fan we have and every bit of exposure we get. There's no crying over sour milk in the HFTD camp. We're stoked with what we've accomplished, and are looking forward to the future.

You guys to me are what I would like to call a work class metal band. You guys all have day jobs and families to support. I can see why playing shows and touring would take planning and being picky on who and when you tour. Why did you guys choose to be a band that does not tour eight months out of the year and only play shows during festival season?
We didn't really "choose" that per se. It's just what fell into place and works best for us. We all do have bills, families, jobs, businesses, student loans, etc. While we'd love to be on the road year-round, it just isn't a decent option for us. We are still stoked on supporting the new album and playing for as many fans as we can. We just have to properly plan how we get to where we're going and when. I don't want this to come-across like we are "done" with touring. We aren't. We haven't been everywhere we need to go yet. So, for the fans reading this, don't lose hope! We intend on getting our live show out to as many locations as possible the best that we can.

Speaking of this new record can you tell us more about the writing process?
Sure can. Jack pretty well handles the majority of the initial songwriting. He writes the guitar music and structures the songs. He sends that out, at that point, to me, James and Brendan. I write lyrics and vocals and bounce that around for opinions. James writes and scores all the orchestral parts and Brendan writes all the drums and auxiliary percussion. James writes some of the auxiliary percussion as well (what we thoughtfully refer to as the "thunder drums"). Usually, the lyrics/vocals are the LAST thing that actually gets finished up/agreed on. After that we move into overall song arrangement/transitions. During this time James will take all the songs for the album and examine them for proper song order and write transitions (if applicable). Once that's all said and done, in theory, we're ready to record a new album.

You guys went to Kansas City to record with Joshua Barber. How much of the record changed from what you guys had at home to when you went into the studio?
Not much, really. We self-tracked all the guitars and bass, so there wasn't much room ... nor was there much intention on

changing much in the studio. Josh did definitely give us some direction while tracking drums and vocals, as well as help us with sound design. He helped demand more from me personally on the vocals, which I think helped drive me to perform better than I would have, had I self-tracked the vocals like I did on *Dissimulation*. He also did a fantastic job mixing the album. Josh Barber definitely played a big part in making the album what it is, but we just didn't really change much in the way of arrangement while we were there.

Speaking about vocals. There are so many different ways vocalists approach the way they write lyrics. Some are straightforward in what they want to say. Then some are more vague. What is your style in writing lyrics and can you tell us about some of the themes in this record?
Much in the same way we write our music, I write my lyrics. Sometimes I write with influences directly from Scripture ... sometimes from life experience ... and sometimes I like to write from the standpoint of a fictional character. There are a few songs on this album written around "concepts." For instance, the single we released ("In Isolation"), is based loosely off of the ideas behind the well-known poem "Footprints" or "Footprints in the Sand." The song is written from the standpoint of a lonely, frustrated and supposedly God-less man, who feels like he's walked his journey on this earth alone. The lyrics are pretty simplistic, in all honesty. Later in the song he pleads for companionship, only to realize that he's had it all along. One of the songs ("Iniquitous") reflects my overall disgust for what I've seen in PARTS of the "Christian" music scene. Not ALL of it, just PARTS. I've seen a lot of bands claim the name of Christ just to push their own agendas and boost their own ego (usually while coupled with the latest "trends"). It literally makes me sick to my stomach. I personally don't care if you play music to further the kingdom of God, or play music because you enjoy music. Let's just leave it at that. I could go on all day. There are a lot of things covered lyrically on the album ... you'll just have to wait and see (smiles).

Someone posted on the band's facebook and you guys ate at Chipotle a lot during the recording process. What other fun things or cool eats did you guys do while recording?
Man, we ate a LOT of stuff in KC. There was another burrito place, a BBQ place, Taco Tuesday (which, I didn't enjoy, actually), pizzas, wings, Chinese! Josh Barber knows how to take a band out to eat. Let's just say that.
Did any of your wifes put you guys on a diet when you guys got back home?
Not that I'm aware of? I think Jack tried to ditch soda for a day, but then we had a band Christmas party and left all the soda at his house.

Seeing you guys have recorded two other albums before this one, how easy was it to go in the studio and hammer this record out?
I wouldn't say it was "easy." Since we are continually trying to progress ... every album is a new challenge for us. That being said, we did feel a little more "prepared" going in for this one. We had a better grip on what we needed to provide track-wise, and were ESPECIALLY better prepared with our orchestrations.

***Aletheia* has less than 10 tracks on this, but is as long as a full-length record. There has not been a band since Underoath was a death metal band to write songs that are seven minutes and longer. What made you guys go this route and not 12 or 13 songs that are five minutes?**
Ha-ha, I find that second sentence to be highly inaccurate. There are plenty of bands writing seven-minute songs! Show some love, man! Like I said before, we write what we want how we want. If that means a song ends up being eight minutes ... a song ends up being eight minutes! We don't try to restrict our songs to a typical length. We also don't try to write our albums to achieve a certain number of "tracks." I've seen some bands put out EPs with seven-eight two-minute songs on it. If that works for them, it works! We just do our thing, man, and it is whatever it is in length of songs and number of tracks.

It seems like a lot of bands are putting in work to help promote their record. You guys made your own lyric video. Was that your guy's choice or the label's?
We offered to do it. I do a lot of basic video work and wanted to take a stab at it. James is pretty slick with graphic work, so we teamed up on it. Jason at Facedown seemed to be pretty happy with what we came up with. We do what we can to promote, and you'll see our promotion efforts stepping up in the weeks leading up to the album release. We don't really care to over-spam everyone's news feed on Facebook TOO early in the game. I think you'll find that we are pretty DIY ... and will do most things ourselves rather than pay someone else to do something like that.

Seems like vinyl has made a comeback over the past few years. Though none of your releases has seen the wax treatment. Do you think that if you guys did get the record on vinyl it would do good? Or are to too metal for wax (and it would just melt while playing)?
Man I'd love to see the album on vinyl, but I'm not sure there are any immediate plans for it at this time.

What is a random fact /funny story about you or the other guys in the band?
What happens in HFTD, stays in HFTD. First rule about HFTD, you do not talk about HFTD.

Well, it looks likes you broke the first rule with this interview. Didn't think about that now?
It's really a "members only" rule. We want everyone else to talk about the band.

Thanks for your time. We can't wait to see what tricks you pull at Facedown Fest.
Thanks, brother. I really appreciate the interview!

✖

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Album reviews

39 ALBUMS 42 BOOKS & FILM

RED

RELEASE THE PANIC

Release the Panic, the fourth studio album from Christian-rock-veterans RED, has a distinctly different sound from its predecessors, thanks to producer Howard Benson (Flyleaf, POD, Skillet, Third Day). While it is different – less strings (which have become a RED staple) and more techno/synth – it is still iconic RED.

Heavy-hitting tracks like "Damage" and the title track, which are some of the hardest songs RED has written, will please any headbanger, while "Hold Me Now" and "So Far Away" are the melodic ballads that will move your heart. "Perfect Life" and "Die for You" are quality rock songs sure to garner mainstream radio play, and "Same Disease" has a bit of an '80s power-rock flare. Old-school fans will prefer the second half of the album, especially "Glass House," which mimics the complex melodies and strings of the previous albums.

Thematically, many songs expand on the idea of being true to yourself and not letting the seemingly perfect world turn you into another mindless clone. In "Perfect Life," lead singer Michael Barnes screams, "You want a perfect, perfect life / Nothing wrong, nothing real inside / All I see is a perfect lie." The music video for "Release the Panic" is a sequel to the epic, movie-like video for "Feed the Machine" – the band members rebel against the evil Accedia Corporation that sells the "perfect life." The deluxe edition has two additional new songs, "Love Will Leave a Mark" and "As You Go," plus three remixes – you've got to love the dupstep version of "Death of Me." [ESSENTIAL] SARAH BREHM

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

PLUMB

NEED YOU NOW

Plumb's *Need You Now* is one of those rare recordings which gladden the world. Hovering somewhere in the sonic hinterland betwixt Metric and Garbage, this project is a collection of electronica-infused power-pop, containing everything from sweeping ballads to pounding dance-rock, all highlighted by the soaring vocals of Tiffany Arbuckle Lee (aka Plumb), whose voice easily masters and overmatches most of the banal divas currently on the musical horizon. Considering the successes of Plumb over the last few years (songs in commercial soundtracks like *Bruce Almighty*, *Vampire Diaries*, and *One Tree Hill*, as well as five Top-5 and three #1 singles in Billboard's Hot Dance Single chart, reflecting the widespread embrace of Plumb in the remix/dance community), it's unsurprising that such a broad stylistic palette is enacted here (lots of provender for more remixes; Curb Records, are you listening?) Continuing the unified vision of the world as interwoven on every level with transcendent and spiritual reality (demonstrated as well on previous Plumb projects featuring the writing team of Tiffany Lee and longtime producer Matt Brownlee), the songs honestly engage lyrically with relationships stressed, broken, healing and healthy (both with God and with man, and at times both simultaneously), and the subject matter evokes the experience of normal life lived nonetheless in God's presence with all its attendant loss, hope and restoration (all over a wicked beat). This is a great album: Huzzah, say I. If you've got the monetary scratch, this is your musical itch, you: arise and obtain. ~~[CURB] KEMPER CRABB~~

WHITE COLLAR SIDESHOW

THE WITCHUNT

This creative entity brought a fresh yet dirty, blunt yet impressionistic live show to a music scene that was ripe for something new. After touring the saw-blade and keg-banging double-drum music for over three years, the team went into the woodshed to carve out something completely new and different. The two-disc result is amazing on all levels. It's nice to have an audio disc that holds its own without the visuals; and the dvd disc jumps off the screen with a compelling and well-edited story. The frenetic industrial charges the visual with an energy that's perfect for the medium. The visuals are not for the faint of heart, but showing gluttony by close-ups of a man shoveling food into his mouth and a leggy blonde hurling chunks into a trashcan kinda gets the point across with maximum volume. ~~[CRASH LANDING] DOUG VAN PELT~~

FIT FOR A KING

CREATION | DESTRUCTION

With *Creation | Destruction* Fit For A King doesn't reinvent the wheel, they've just built an exceptionally well crafted one. The band's Solid State debut blends melody and mayhem together with a degree of artistry that is surprisingly fresh while hitting all the marks expected of today's metal outfits. The best I can describe what FFAK sounds like would be to take equal parts Saosin and *The Hammering Process* era Living Sacrifice, that would get you into the ballpark. I was instantly taken with this album due to the stellar production values, the crunchy detuned guitars just scratched an itch I was desperate to be satiated and the rhythm section sounds tight and massive. The vocals on *Creation | Destruction* is where FFAK set themselves apart. Instead of simply using higher register singing vocals to break the monotony of screams and growls, they use the melodic passages to actually sing memorable melodies and use them to take the songs to another place. Standout tracks for me were: "Hollow King (Sound Of The End)," with its aggressive vocal cold start and a cool syncopated feel to the verses that is sure to get the pit going; "Skin & Bones" is probably my favorite track on this record – a slower more emotive song laced with electronic loops and a sweet melody pondering life and the hereafter. The More I listen to this record the more I find to like about it. If you're tired or discouraged about today's modern metal climate, you definitely owe it to yourself to pick up this solid release from a solid band. ~~[SOLID STATE] JEF CUNNINGHAM~~

HEARTS OF SAINTS

FOR ALL OF US

A double-disc of declaration/rock songs (disc 1) and vertical-oriented worship songs (disc 2) shows a band on a well-thought-out mission. "Birth of a Legacy" churns along with an urgency, while "You're Alive" sounds typical of what you'll hear on any city's Adult Contemporary Christian music radio station. It's technically rock, with a solid four-piece instrumentation as its foundation, but the melodies are so bright and poppy that it's like what Christian rock would sound like if Target or Walmart produced the stuff. Thankfully, Hearts of Saints has enough heart to avoid the manufactured sound; instead treading a hipper sound not too unlike House of Heroes, where sweet melodies soar above snappy and creative bass lines that make for an interesting ride. This is most notable in disc 1's closer, "Attraction, Distraction." Disc 2 delivers good sing-along-ables like "Everlasting," "Our Generation" and "For All of Us." Kudos to producers Michael Farren (known for writing modern worship staples "Let it Rain" and "Let the Worshippers Arise") and Andy Hunt (Buddy Guy, Matthew West), who guided both discs in pleasant directions. ~~[HOS] DOUG VAN PELT~~

PHINEHAS

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN

In this "rarities and b-sides" EP, Phinehas puts together a fresh combination of their conventional technical metal style with the over-the-topness of metal-gone-acoustic. "Panhammer" is a solid opener, setting the metal tone; later, they'll do Underoath metal acoustically on "Crowns." But, at the end of the record, "The Wishing Well" gets so epic you start to wonder if it's a joke and the guys are in the control booth egging on the extent of the song's grandeur. It's a good thing it's a rarities release (it's everyone's Get Out of Jail Free Card): You don't have to feel obligated to like every choice they've made. I didn't, but there are flashes of brilliance. ~~[RED CORD] DAVID STAGG~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Red *Release the Panic*	04	04
Plumb *Need You Now*	04	05
White Collar Sideshow *The Witchunt*	04	
Fit For A King *Creation | Destruction*	04	04
Hearts of Saints *For All Of Us*	03*	
Phinehas *The Bridge Between*	03	03*
Audio Adrenaline *Kings and Queens*	03	03*
Jeremy Camp *Reckless*	03	
Hope For The Dying *Aletheia*	04	04
Citizens *S/T*	04*	04
All Delighted People *When The Morning Comes*	04	03*
I Am Empire *Anchors*	04	02

AUDIO ADRENALINE

KINGS & QUEENS

For bands in today's age, the end is rarely the end. So is the case with Contemporary Christian Music mainstays Audio Adrenaline. In 2006 the band decided to call it quits ... or should we say go on hiatus? And now they're back with former DC Talk crooner Kevin Max taking over the lead vocal role on the band's ninth studio album titled *Kings & Queens*. Listening to this new project form the beloved veteran band, you get the sense of a group of men excited about reviving Audio A's brand of melodic late '90s era alternative and mixing it with more modern influences, achieving a sound for them that is both new and familiar. Kevin's sublime vocal performance throughout the entirety of this release breathes a new life into the band and infuses a palatable energy to the more familiar sounding tracks such as "He Moves You Move" & "King Of The Comeback." To me the band really shines on tracks that trend to a slightly more adult audience, such as the penitent "Change My Name," the anthemic "20:17" (Raise The Banner)" and the refreshingly U2-like "Fire Never Sleeps." Audio Adrenaline is an iconic Christian band, and the CCM market is a better place now that they're back. ~~[FAIR TRADE] JEF CUNNINGHAM~~

JEREMY CAMP

RECKLESS

Jeremy Camp wants to be reckless, according to the title and lead-off track to his new album. Don't be surprised, though, we're talking thematically. Dude hasn't gone metal or industrial on us. If you've heard Camp sing, "Jesus, You Are My Reward," you've almost heard the bulk of this album. His ballads still ring in roughly the same lower register, which invites more male singers to join his God-worshipping audience. The dynamics he uses are quite successful. Take, for instance, his song "Free" on this new album. He tenderly sounds vulnerable and all story-telling like, which breaks into a quickened pace for the chorus of declaration: "I am free / my sin was wrapped around me / trying to drown me / You have set me free." Musically, it's safe, and, while the lyrics don't cut prophetically quite as sharp as, say, Derek Webb or Keith Green, the words are serious calls to obedience. I like the wordplay found in "We Must Remember," where he juxtaposes remembering the fact that God forgets our sins when He forgives us. ~~[BEC] DOUG VAN PELT~~

HOPE FOR THE DYING

ALETHEIA

Hope for the Dying's sophomore release (following 2010's *Dissimulation*) is a grandiose, technical-metal effort that's truly indulgent. (Indulgent, used here, is not a negative; some of the work legitimately unnecessary at times, but then again, it's worth listening to, like watching an extended fireworks display on July 4th.) Sprawling and lingering (the first track clocks in just a shade under 10 minutes), the guitar-work and songwriting are worth the listen. But throughout the record, they pepper their artwork with either overly harmonized and almost too perfect singing, or quasi-scream-singing. When they stick to their metal guts of guttural vocals and six-string symphony (there are great movements in "Reformation," for example), the record flows really well. But adding in some of the singing comes across as off-putting, like someone with a perpetual cough sitting behind you while you're watching a movie. Other than that, it's an excellent listen. For the true metal fan. ~~[FACEDOWN] DAVID STAGG~~

CITIZENS

S/T

Citizens are a high-energy indie rock worship band born in the heart of Seattle's University District. Being From Seattle, they capture more of a European sound. With sweet guitar licks and melodic synthesized keys. Well, I guess it does rain in Europe as much as it does in Seattle – with a mix of Kings of Leon, Phoenix and Hillsong United. These guys are a hipster Christian's dream band. I could see these songs being played in contemporary churches all over the world. I could also see songs like "Hail The King" and "Made Alive" in a car commercial. If they do not get radio airplay on Christian radio and are not in the top 10, I will be surprised. Citizens are another great band from Mars Hill Church's New Mars Hill Music Label. I cannot wait to hear what comes next from this band and great new worship label. ~~[MARS HILL MUSIC] ROB SHAMELESS~~

ALL DELIGHTED PEOPLE

WHEN THE MORNING COMES

Co-ed ten-piece named for a Sufjan Stevens song come on like a praise & worship band for listeners who make music like current indie bands recently discovering '70s classic rock. Rend Collective Experiment goes to a Band of Horses concert and return all humbly epic, with smidgens of disco and dubstep dynamics (in the same song), and hopefully not all emergent and contemplative? Yes, something like that. Judicious use of squalling guitars and dynamic shifts, the notion that they bring it on in concert and a general air of sincerity doesn't overcome, for this listener anyway, an impression that an ineluctable element of greater memorability is amiss here. Hooks? That maybe, but something definitely. *When The Morning Comes* nonetheless impresses for its reach-to-grasp ratio and at least a different direction for rocking P&W. ~~[ADP] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

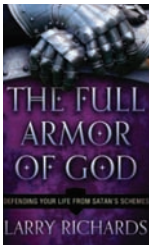
I AM EMPIRE

ANCHORS

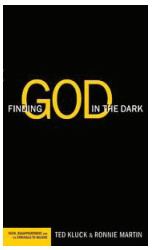
Anchors, I Am Empire's sophomore album, is painfully palatable. It's a wannabe metalcore-tinged record that will play easily on radio (only one song clocks in over four minutes and easily the bulk are over as soon as they start). (My bet: I Am Empire would vehemently deny any metalcore reference. But given the songwriting, they're obviously drawing on the teenage mosh-pit audience in their breakdowns and bridges. It's exactly what pop artists did with dubstep breakdowns in late-2011 and 2012.) Radio friendly, yes, but it's considered edgy enough for the "fringe" Christian kid – and, more importantly, parents will let their kids listen to it. With some decent breakdowns and solos (check out "Gasoline"), it shows the flashes of musicianship you want from a record, but it inevitably turns back into the same agreeable radio rock you'll hear at Christian music festivals all summer. It's unfortunate, too. Lead singer Austin Lyons has incredible range vocally, and could easily front a throwback '80s metal band. The guitar work isn't particularly cookie-cutter, either, but put it all together and it takes on the feel of 90% of the radio-rock-friendly albums you've heard before. If the record would take off the kid gloves, I Am Empire could have staying power. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

LIFEstyle

books & graphic novels

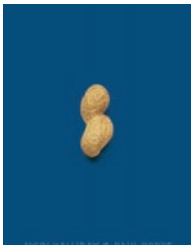


THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD
LARRY RICHARDS
Looking for a fresh approach to the subject of spiritual warfare? If you grew up on Christian metal in the late '80s, you were probably fed a lot of similar theology. Richards goes after tactical guidance for conquering the lies and other attacks of the enemy that assail believers. [Chosen]

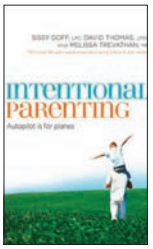


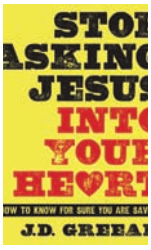
FINDING GOD IN THE DARK | TED KLUCK & RONNIE MARTIN
Yes, this is co-written by that Ronnie Martin. He confesses how he struggled with the kind of identity and idolatry issues that come with being a well-known recording artist, "before the unexpected death of his father allowed those sins to be brought to the surface of his heart." Add to that the co-author, Ted Kluck's failed adoption, and you have two guys dealing with gut-wrenching hurt and disillusionment. [Bethany House]

PEANUT | AYUN HALLIDAY & PAUL HOPPE
A fun graphic novel about everyday life in high school, growing up, dealing with friends, parents and a dreaded allergy to the peanut. Illustrated well and splashed with red every so often for a nice effect. [Schwartz & Wade]



INTENTIONAL PARENTING
SISSY GOFF, DAVID THOMAS AND MELISSA TREVATHAN
Wait a minute? Why is HM reviewing a book on parenting? Don't they know we're a bunch of teens and twenty-somethings? "Au contraire," comes the reply. You should see how many of us are a bit older and have kids in tow at concerts and summer festivals. Plus, a good book is a good book. "Autopilot is for planes," the book says. The title alone speaks volumes. Key advice on balancing emotion, boundaries, freedom, relationship, connecting, playing, it's a broad read and quite useful (maybe even a way to find clandestine information on your parents' strategies if you are a teen! [Thomas Nelson]





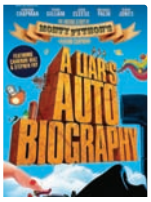
STOP ASKING JESUS INTO YOUR HEART
J.D. GREEAR
Subtitled *How to Know for Sure You Are Saved*, this book takes a straight-forward look at a not-too-uncommon habit for some (going forward for altar call after altar call, getting re-baptized after the "feeling" goes away ... and again.). The author explains: "Because of my own experience with asking Jesus into my heart thousands of times, and still not being able to find peace, and because of a growing concern with people who think they are going to heaven simply because they've prayed a prayer, I want to be clear what saves the sinner." [B&H]

SHATTERED | DANI PETTREY
A suspense novel set in Yancey, Alaska. Piper McKenna is determined to protect her prodigal brother upon his return to town ... and he gets arrested for murder. All the evidence points against him, but his faithful sister trusts him and sets out to win his freedom. The local deputy tries to balance his own investigation and his protective instincts for his friend Piper. [Bethany House]

A CAST OF STONES | PATRICK W. CARR
In the backwater village of Callowford, roustabout Errol Stone is enlisted by a church messenger arriving with urgent missives for the hermit priest in the hills. Eager for coin, Errol agrees to what he thinks will be an easy task, but soon finds himself hunted by deadly assassins. Forced to flee with the priest and a small band of travelers, Errol soon learns he's joined a quest that could change the fate of his kingdom. [Bethany House]

THIS IS GONNA HURT | NIKKI SIXX
Who knew that Nikki Sixx had a redemptive side? Not exactly a proponent of "organized religion," the dude has a gift for capturing the beauty found in everyday people and the outcasts and down-and-out of our modern world. It's amazing to read his tales of hanging out with almost-dead junkies in alleyways to capture their story on film. Dark, raw and somewhat dirty. Reprinted in paperback for the first time. [William Morrow]

LIFEstyle film



A LIAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Monty Python is such an endearing comedy troupe to those who love our humor bent and twisted. In an ironic twist, this beloved member (Graham Chapman) seemed to foreknow that a documentary would or should be made of his life, so he began reading portions of his book (same title) on camera. Directors Bill Jones (son of Terry Jones), Jeff Simpson and Ben Timlett, with help from animators at 14 studios, have ingeniously turned those tapes into a hilarious, revealing and poignant look at this creative genius and complicated man. The medium is used, however, as an autobiographical treatise of sorts. It really comes off as a conflicted processing of his homosexuality. [Virgil Films] *DV*

AFTER THE WIZARD

A heartfelt, often humorous and always entertaining story about a 12-year-old girl named Elizabeth who lives in an orphanage in Kingman, Kansas. Like millions of girls her age she has read the beloved L. Frank Baum novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* countless times. But unlike other girls, Elizabeth believes she is Dorothy ... and maybe she is. With Elizabeth referring to herself as Dorothy and constantly looking for Toto and a way back to Oz, the headmistress at the orphanage worries about Elizabeth and fears that she is losing touch with reality. Meanwhile back in Oz things have not gone well for the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman or the Lion. Oz is in trouble and they believe Dorothy is the one person who can help save their home, just as she did before. Only this time they have to find her. The Tin Woodman and Scarecrow embark on an incredible cross country adventure as they leave Oz to search for Dorothy in Kansas. Traveling by hot air balloon, train, bus and foot, the endearing duo find themselves lost in a world full of colorful strangers who are familiar with them, including a group of New Jersey schoolchildren they mistake for Munchkins and a wise Southern blind man who guides them on their journey. An unforgettable story unfolds as the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman search for and are reunited with Dorothy…the kind of story that lives on in the imagination and hearts of people forever. [Breaking Glass Pictures]

WHORE'S GLORY

This movie is a nightmare. An unflinching documentary on the sex trade with a specific focus on the organized prostitution with willing participants. You get a glimpse of the painful life of the women, often teetering on the edge of destruction, the sex-drunk men who pay for this "profession" and up-close view of the conditions and context of the trade – in Bangladesh, Bangkok and Reynosa. Heartbreaking and not for the faint of heart. Difficult to watch because of the subject matter alone, but Director Michael Glawogger chose to document the inherent nudity in some situations, not feeling like exploitation in the most common sense, but it adds to the conflict of watching it. It's interesting to see Scripture used as titles in a few spots in the movie, but the relevance is proven by the broken lives and suffering that the Gospel addresses. [Kino Lorber] *DV*

[Cuss: 25+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 37 | Spiritual Conversations: 90]

FRED & VINNIE

Lonely guy and semi-professional actor Fred Stoller (who plays himself) is thrilled when his good buddy, Vinnie D'Angelo (Angelo Tsarouchas), the world's happiest agoraphobic and fattest vegetarian, comes to live with him, until Vinnie also proves to be the world's most maddening roommate. Sometimes it's the sign of a "good" movie when it gets under your skin. *Pacific Heights* and *What About Bob?* come to mind. Because the characters are slow-moving, dim and painfully awkward socially, it easily evokes these kind of emotions for the viewer. Good for them, but kind of a strain on the old entertainment time (I'll never get those two hours back), but there are indeed moments to laugh at. [Horizon Movies] *DV*

WAR OF THE DEAD

Yeah, this promotional quote is about right: "*Band of Brothers* meets *The Walking Dead* in this terrifying WWII zombie epic." In March 1941, Captain Martin Stone (Andrew Tiernan) leads an American unit on a mission to destroy a secret Nazi underground bunker. Fighting alongside an elite platoon, the soldiers find themselves attacked by the same men they killed in an earlier assault. Now, the remaining officers must struggle to survive against the war's most terrifying enemy – a flesh-hungry army of the living dead. [eone] *DV*

SPECIAL FORCES

An explosive DVD thriller in the vein of *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Black Hawk Down*. In the acclaimed 2012 theatrical film, an elite French military unit takes on the Taliban in a desperate hostage rescue mission; it stars Diane Kruger (*Inglorious Basterds*, *Farewell, My Queen*) as kidnapped journalist Elsa Casanova and Academy Award® Nominee Djimon Hounsou (*Gladiator*, *Blood Diamond*) as the lead commando, Kovax. After the team manages to free Elsa, their radio is destroyed in a firefight. Now, deep behind Afghan enemy lines, the group faces the ultimate challenges of survival, honor and sacrifice as they try to outrun their pursuers through the treacherous mountains of the Hindu Kush. To enter our contest for a chance to win this DVD, simply send an email (to contests@hmmag.com) with "Special Forces" in the subject heading and your name and address in the body. Five winners will be randomly selected by / before March 31. [eone]

KEY to Ratings = number of scenes w/cussing, gratuitous sex, violence & how easy it would be to start a "spiritual conversation" after viewing it with someone.

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

Concerning "Jesus is My Girlfriend" Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today's Worship (Part the Ninth)

We've seen in this series that contemporary worship music has become dominated by songs modeled on romantic, experiential, subjective musical expressions. We've further seen that, though such songs are a legitimate stream of Biblical worship expression, they have been historical and Biblical worship models (such as the Psalms or the Book of Revelation) held in balance with objective, doctrinal song content.

We then began to investigate how and why such an imbalance has occurred in arriving at such an experiential overemphasis. We began by seeing that the deep alienation between God and mankind engendered by the Fall leads men to see the world dualistically, as split between the "pure" spiritual realm and the flawed and imperfect physical world, a view which is a result of the simultaneous and inescapable knowledge that men have rebelled against their Holy Creator, while they attempt to suppress that inescapable knowledge (Romans 1: 18-32).

This split was institutionalized in Platonic thought, which hugely influenced monastic thought, which shaped to a certain extent, the way the Medievals viewed Reality, resulting in a Late Medieval and Renaissance perspective, which located emotion and instinct in a "religious" zone, while reason and normative life were seen as belonging to the "secular" sphere.

Christian reactions to the rationalism of the Enlightenment fused with Victorian and pietist viewpoints to produce a feminized, experientially-fixated Evangelicalism whose worship music institutionalized these attitudes for that branch of the Church.

This was all the easier because there is a legitimate strand of subjective and emotional aspects included in biblical worship paradigms (for instance, in Psalms 51, 56, 3, 6, etc.).

For instance, Psalm 6: 6-7 says:
I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief; It grows old because of all my enemies.

You'll note that, just as a huge portion of today's worship lyrics are oriented to subjective "my," "me" and "I" perspectives, these verses in Psalm 6 are legitimately so oriented.

There is even justification for engaging in romantic imagery to describe God's relationship with His People (as in the Song of Solomon or Isaiah 62: 4-5; etc.).

For instance, Isaiah 62: 4-5 reads:
You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married. For [as] a young man marries a virgin, [So] shall your sons marry you; And [as] the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, [So] shall your God rejoice over you.

However, these aspects of worship are balanced in Scriptural presentations by objective, cognitive, doctrinal, historical, intellectual, and doxological components, such as are seen in Psalms 19, 1, 2, 147; Revelation chapters 4 and 5; Ezekiel 10; and Isaiah 6; etc.

Psalm 19: 10-11 tells us:
More to be desired [are they] than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, [And] in keeping them [there is] great reward.

And Psalm 147: 1-5 says:
Praise the LORD! For [it is] good to sing praises to our God; For [it is] pleasant, [and] praise is beautiful. The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great [is] our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding [is] infinite.

These texts (especially the Psalms) are intended to be used in the public worship of God (as is all of Holy Writ), and, as has been noted, there is a balance in Scripture of these differing emphases. The intertwining of these disparate elements is present in many of the same worship passages.

In Psalm 19, which we've already seen an example of its largely doctrinal and doxological content, ends with an emotional and subjective plea (verses 12-14):
Who can understand [his] errors? Cleanse me from secret [faults]. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous [sins]; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

The Bible abounds with such instances of a worship balance, unlike our imbalanced contemporary approach. We will, Lord willing, consider the implications of this in the next issue.

[*kemperercrabb.net*]

Devotions with Greg Tucker

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.
Galatians 6:7

I once met with a young woman before she left for what promised to be an unpleasant family reunion. Based on previous gatherings, she knew that along with potato salad, the afternoon would be filled with gossip, endless criticism, and a never-ending stream of good, old-fashioned complaining. "I'd rather have a tooth pulled," she told me. Along with spiritual guidance, I handed her an envelope with specific instructions on when to open it: "Only in an emergency."

Later, she called to report that the document I'd given her was just what she needed. God had used it to partially answer our prayers. I had provided her with a list of bagpipe jokes, including these:

• How do you make a set of bagpipes sound beautiful?
(Sell them and buy a saxophone.)

• What's one thing you never hear people say?
("Oh, that's the bagpipe player's Porsche.)

• What's the difference between a bagpipe and an onion?
(No one cries when you chop up a bagpipe.)

• What's the definition of a gentleman?
(Someone who knows how to play the bagpipe and doesn't.)

• What did the bagpiper get on his I.Q. test?
(Drool.)

Maybe you've heard those, so let me share one that wasn't on the list. After an extensive yearlong study, LaughLab determined that the world's funniest joke goes like this: Two hunters are in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed, so his buddy frantically pulls out a phone and dials 911, screaming into the receiver. "My friend is dead! My friend is dead! What can I do?" The operator says "Calm down, sir, I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead." There's silence, then a gunshot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says, "Okay, now what?"

Most people love humor, especially when it's creative and clean. We don't need scientific data to tell us laughter is healthy. It benefits us emotionally, psychologically, and socially. A belly laugh can be both a stress reliever and a physical workout, rolled into one.

The Bible assures us that every good and every perfect gift comes from our heavenly father, and that includes positive emotions. When I read the characteristics of a Christian recorded in Galatians 5:22-23, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control), I'm struck that most of these traits are easily accompanied by a smile. There are times when there's no substitute for exercising one's sense of humor.

In Ecclesiastes 3, the Bible tells us there is a time for laughter. On those occasions, whether it's a belly laugh at the hilarity of a situation or the nervous giggle that helps one cope in a tough spot, laughter is the Order of the Day.

When I read my Bible, I wish the Gospel writers had given us a glimpse of Jesus' sense of humor. I'm sure he had one. He went to parties and knew how to connect with people, yet there's no account of the Jesus chuckling. Crying, yes, but never laughing.

God, on the other hand, knows how to be amused. But what gets Him going? Is it a creative riddle? A story well told? Neither of those will make Him laugh, but three times we're told what does. According to Psalms 2:4; 37:13; and 59:8, God laughs – actually laughs – at wicked people in this world who think He's a joke.

Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can write him at Greg@TuckerSignatureFilms.com

VOL. 14 – IT'S NOT THAT HARD

Friday nights in high school were typified by rock and roll decadence. My friends and I would load amps and gear into the sanctuary of my church (my dad as senior pastor gave me free reign). We would then head over to the gas station to stock up on junk food for a late night of a lot of indulgence and a little bit of music. We were the least practical band you could think of, mostly due to interpersonal squabbles that usually saw us break up and reform twice a month, and because we only had two songs.

We liked every aspect of being a band. This included: talking about our band at school, dressing like guys found inside CD jackets, and dreaming of rock superstardom while simultaneously decrying mainstream music for selling out. Yes, we had fashion, integrity, and … two songs. We would spend entire Saturdays doing photo shoots – posing with our instruments, waiting by the railroad tracks for a passing train and then act causal against a chain link fence in the foreground, and later doing music video treatments. Then, we would update our Myspace page with cool pictures (after adding sepia tints), update our show sections ("coming soon") and label status ("seeking"). Yes, occasionally we would play our songs or attempt to jam out a new one, but the politics of actually being a creative entity were far easier to control when you don't try to be creative. Tony wanted us to be as heavy as Korn, Matt wanted to change the band name (again!), and Tim didn't really care because, well, he was the bassist. I wanted us to have a more evangelical approach, as I was mining the deep influence of early Relient K. The worst part was when Tony's mom elected him to be lead singer, but Tony was too shy to actually sing. He was not, however, too shy to update our Myspace with his new title. Yes, we were being manipulated from the outside by a crazy stage mom, before such behavior was rewarded with a reality TV show, which could have been our big break.

The Latest Craze by Fanmail was the best album I had ever laid ears on. Purchased at Family Christian Bookstore with my precious lawn mowing money, it ended up being the soundtrack to teenage years now viewed through the amber-tint of eternal summer; responsibilities were low and hooks this good could plausibly make you hear your older-self drip narration ala *The Wonder Years*. I remember distinctly moving the lawn, headphones in my ears, giving the album its first spin while my dad grilled outside. Fanmail has the distinction of having the largest drop in album quality from their first to second album (first album: pop-punk classic; second album: cringe-worthy cover of the Backstreet Boys that always embarrassed me even as a pre-teen); also the largest drop in album art quality (first album: colorful animation of invertebrate fans in a frenzy; second album: Fanmail 2000, the band depicted as beefed-up cyberspace super heroes).

Fanmail was everything that made childhood good in 1999. It was hooky, fast-paced, and told me that I could be a rock star, because, "It's not that hard." A pop-punk super album, this in no short effect to its cast of Christian punk all-stars (Slick Shoes occasional guitarist, backing vocals from Quayle's frontman, Nick Garrisi and, of course, the former frontman of Plankeye). The album kicks off with punk anthem "Messed Up" (although I used to sing this all the time before I was messed up … maybe it was self-fulfilling) and doesn't slow down, with memorable choruses, massive guitar solos, and backing vocals to rival the intensity of those at the fore, all in clean-but-with-an-edge production. It seemed like everyone in the band just meant it, whether it was lamenting a breakup, bouncing along to a summer surf jam, or hailing the ease of rock super stardom and a super-fan base (and this had to be a true, because they were rock stars to me).

My friend Matt and I were jamming out in our inaugural band (or at least our inaugural documentation, as we were now utilizing my church's sound system to record to cassette tapes that had the lifespan of a single playback – yes, as volatile as our own partnership). This was not only to hear how great we sounded (and we thought we did), but also to record our demo tape and get us signed to a record label (since we had all of two songs and not a show played between us). The first song was our best, "Ghost Town," and mainly because I can't recall the other track. We recorded it on a Saturday morning and promptly sent it out to Fanmail's frontman, Scott Silletta, who had just started his own label Vanishing Point (sadly, it vanished in a year). I tried to convince him to sign us in the accompanying letter by using his own lyrics as persuasion: "It's not that hard." Of course, he did inspire me, and I can't tell you how many times I've sang along to that chorus promising me an easy road to fame and record deals from someone who was, after all, a signed musician. It did, in fact, seem easier back then.

I once met Scottie and had the chance to show my gratitude. Fanmail was scheduled to play at a large Christian music festival (interesting, Fanmail and Fanmail live, two separate bands, were both listed separately in the credits of *Latest Craze*). Upon arrival, however, the updated schedule of bands excluded Fanmail. I was dismayed, yet elated when, while pulling out of the fairgrounds to get lunch, I saw who I recognized as frontman Scottie driving a van behind us (his video for "Rock N Roll Star" off of a Tooth and Nail anthology DVD, is still one of the best I've seen). I immediately dove to the back seat, opened up the window (it was the kind with the lock on it that only gives you two inches) stuck my face in the crevice and asked "Are you Fanmail?"

Scottie gave me the rock sign – a derivative of sign language "I love you" or the secular devil horns.

The rock sign! For me! Even though Fanmail didn't play the festival (he was DJing for a rap rock bastardization, and this new-found record spinning helped ruin Fanmail's sophomore follow-up) he brought band merch and listened to me pour out my heart in 13-year old idolization (as I handed him money for one of each shirt design). It's not that hard … in a corn field in Wisconsin, your fans will find you.

I didn't get it at the time, but his band was Fanmail, his album *Latest Craze*, and his best song "Rock and Roll Star." These all suggest a grandeur, a typification of rock success that eluded Fanmail and led to the self-depreciating irony lost on only me. Fanmail did start a latest craze for me, and although I didn't write him letters, I e-mailed him. Scottie had success in my eyes, because nobody wrote better songs than him. The album could have been called *Beatle-mania* and I would have taken it as an authentic measure of how to appreciate them … in stampedes of devotion.

The Latest Craze is still an infectious listen. Seriously, all 11 tracks are great (and I have to give special mention to the bass line in "Shirley McClain"). Fanmail still represents summers full of easy days and tangible dreams, of mowing lawns and record deals. And I'm still in bands, which besides some newfound longevity, none of which have gone much of anywhere. But, hey Scottie, I'm in on the joke. It's not that hard.

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ The Corners
Hailing from Hannibal, MO, The Corners have a breathy, smooth and organic sound that marries elements of Switchfoot, Thrice and Needtobreathe. Their debut release comes out March 5th – *Born At Last*. It was recorded and produced by Philip Zach (Remedy Drive), who did a good job mixing the vocals and multi-instruments.
facebook.com/thecornersfans

☆ Josh Mozug aka Tirades of a Timid Tongue
"A voice of one crying in the concrete wilderness" is Josh Mozug. A little Levi the Poet (without the dramatic shouting), a little Spoken Groove, this slam poet shares from the heart his hurts, his perception of the things that hurt God and a little joy and hope. All sprinkled with compassion and without judgment.
facebook.com/joshmozug

Todd Ballard
Solid worship. Textured rock with strong, clean vocals and atmospheric guitars and keys.
toddballard.com

Mayfly
Slightly rough around the edges progressive/melodic/power metal. Imagine James Labrie's younger brother hooking up with a screamo band that kept the metal squarely between the lines (and refused to growl/scream Cookie Monster style).
mayflysounds.com

Dissident Prophet
Fun and scraggly rock with attitude and a laid-back groove. Imagine Foo Fighters covering Mike Knott/LSU tunes ... if they weren't so hyper. This band's been around awhile and is now back with a full-length, *Weapons of Mass Deception*.
dissidentprophet.com

☆ The Project
Titled *Martyrs Prayers*, this well-produced full-length is lyrically real heavy and intense. The music is often acoustic accompaniment, with strings and soft singing. Part prog rock / part Larry Norman's Upon This Rock (like "Walking Backwards Down the Stairs").
themartyersproject.com

ForChristSake are finishing up recording their debut Roxx Records release entitled 'Apocalyptic Visions of Divine Terror'! The band has just shared the awesome new cover art and full track listing ! Set to take the world by storm on May 7, 2013. Pre-Orders are up now! For Full details visit our website.

Just announced is the VERY Limited 2 disc set of the brand new Boarders Album 'R-Existence'! Disc 2 is an exclusive bonus disc that features the bands long long long lost (and almost lost forever) very first demo from '93' entitled 'Soft Fail System'! And maybe even some more bonus material! Get one quick as there are only less then 100 of this special 2 disc version available!

Roxx Records is the official US distributor of the brand new Power Metal OPUS from Absolon. Absolon is searing US Power Metal that features the vocal talents of Long Lost Malachia vocalist 'Ken Pike' . If you have been Longing For another Metal Opera like Operation Mindcrime, taken to the next level, search no more this IS what you have been looking for!

Also now shipping the debut album from US Power Metal Band InnerSiege! And not 1 but 2 !!! Brand new 2013 releases from Liberty n Justice "The Cigar Chronicles" and "The best of LNJ the early years"

ROXX PRODUCTIONS www.roxxproductions.com ROXX RECORDS

HEAVENS METAL

Rivera/Bomma

#97 RIZIN | GOLDEN RESURRECTION | IN-GRAVED | DAVID BENSON | ALBUM REVIEWS

NOTE FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR | CHRIS GATTO

What's up Metalheads?

Hopefully you guys enjoyed our black metal issue last month. Norway's Antestor was touring Brazil when we interviewed them and we found out that on one of the dates the band faced a good deal of opposition from some black metal fans outside the venue. Our guys remained safe by the grace of God- it just goes to show that spiritual warfare around the world is very real. This issue we have a real mixer for you with the very talented power metal band Rivera Bomma gracing our cover, new up and comers Rizin, classic metal from Mr. David Benson and new Golden Resurrection from Sweden, and Pentagram/ Place of Skulls alum Victor Griffin's new doom troupe In-Graved, which also features ex-Trouble drummer Jeff "Oly" Olsen, metal tracks, and 10 metal album reviews served up steaming hot. Eat up!

Chris Gatto, Heaven's Metal Managing Editor

HEAVEN'S METAL FANZINE MARCH 2013 [#97]

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Heaven's Metal Editorial Team:
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HEAVEN'S METAL

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What is it? It is the expression of love & answers to problems from a Christian world-view. This is the first issue of a bi-monthly newsletter dedicated to hard rock in the Christian music world. This newsletter welcomes all Christian bands and will feature free promotion of all interested parties. If you rock for Christ, send us some info on your band and we'll print it. Although this newsletter is called Heaven's Metal, from time to time it will feature groups who some may not consider metal. (ie: Arkangel, AD, Jimmy Hotz, Darrell Mansfield, Vision, Avion, Dennis Welch, etc.) This is a mid-70's definition of metal. When I was younger, anything from Aerosmith-LedZep was considered heavy metal.

This issue's feature group: STRYPER

OZ FOX, of Stryper, with a lollipop in Austin, Texas.

RISING LIKE A PHOENIX ... RIZIN

RISING OUT OF THE DESERTS OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA, IS A YOUNG, NEW HEAVY METAL BAND CALLED RIZIN. READ ON AS WE INTERVIEW FOUNDER AND VOCALIST DAVE KRUSE.

Tell us a little about Rizin. When was the band formed, and who is in the band?
The band consists of members Dennis Mathis II (guitar), Joshua Roth (bass/backing vocals), Jeremy Wills (drums), Joshua Macias (guitar) and Dave Kruse (lead vocals). The band was originally formed in early 2009 by myself and guitarist Dennis Mathis II. I had posted an ad online looking to start a Christian metal band, and Dennis contacted me. We got together to jam and the chemistry was good. We tried to find bandmates, but had no luck. After a few months with little luck, we moved on and hung it up. We went our separate ways and lost touch. However, in January of 2012 Dennis called me up, and wanted to jam again, so we did. The chemistry was still there, and we decided to give Rizin another shot. We actively searched for bandmates and, again, had no luck. At one point we had considered hanging up the band for good. But we refused to give up and continued to press forward. We are very glad we did! We started writing and recording demos while searching for band members. In May, we were blessed with the addition of bassist Joshua Roth. October saw the additions of drummer Jeremy Wills and guitarist Joshua Macias. We're a tight band. We all get along great and work together very well.

Is Rizin a "Christian band" or "Christians in a band?"
Absolutely! We wouldn't have it any other way. Our faith is the main focus of this band. We put God first. Although our lyrics are dark and tell a story of the dark world we all live in, there is always hope. That hope is in Christ, through the redemption and forgiveness of sins. We always pray before every practice and performance. To be where we are now after really being a band for such a short amount of time is an incredible blessing. We see that God's hand is really in this band. We look forward to what the Lord still has in store for us.

As a Christian band, what are some of your goals?
Our main goal is to use our music to glorify God and to witness to the lost and unsaved. This is our ministry. We are already writing new material for our next album, which will be released sometime this year. We will be

hitting the studio soon to record a brand new single, which will be available for free download. We will also be shooting a music video. Our long term goals are to write heavier and faster songs. Also to play big venues and hopefully tour.

Your first CD is titled *In Ruins* and has a very dark, doomy feel. Would you describe Rizin as a doom band?
I can't help but laugh when people say that we are a doom metal band. We never really set out to be a doom band, but I can see why people would say that and we're totally cool with it. We consider ourselves a metal band. We just like to play fast, heavy and loud. We incorporate old school metal and today's metal into our sound. Our lyrics are dark, indeed, and our sound is as well. When I write lyrics, I get a feel for the music first. Then it's like watching a movie in my mind. I basically just write what I see.

As a band, we have many musical influences, which include Iced Earth, Metallica, Megadeth, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. As a fan of Iced Earth, their influence plays a big part in my writing style on this album. The new music we are currently writing is heavier and faster. It reminds me of old school thrash metal like Deliverance and Tourniquet. We're sure you will love it.

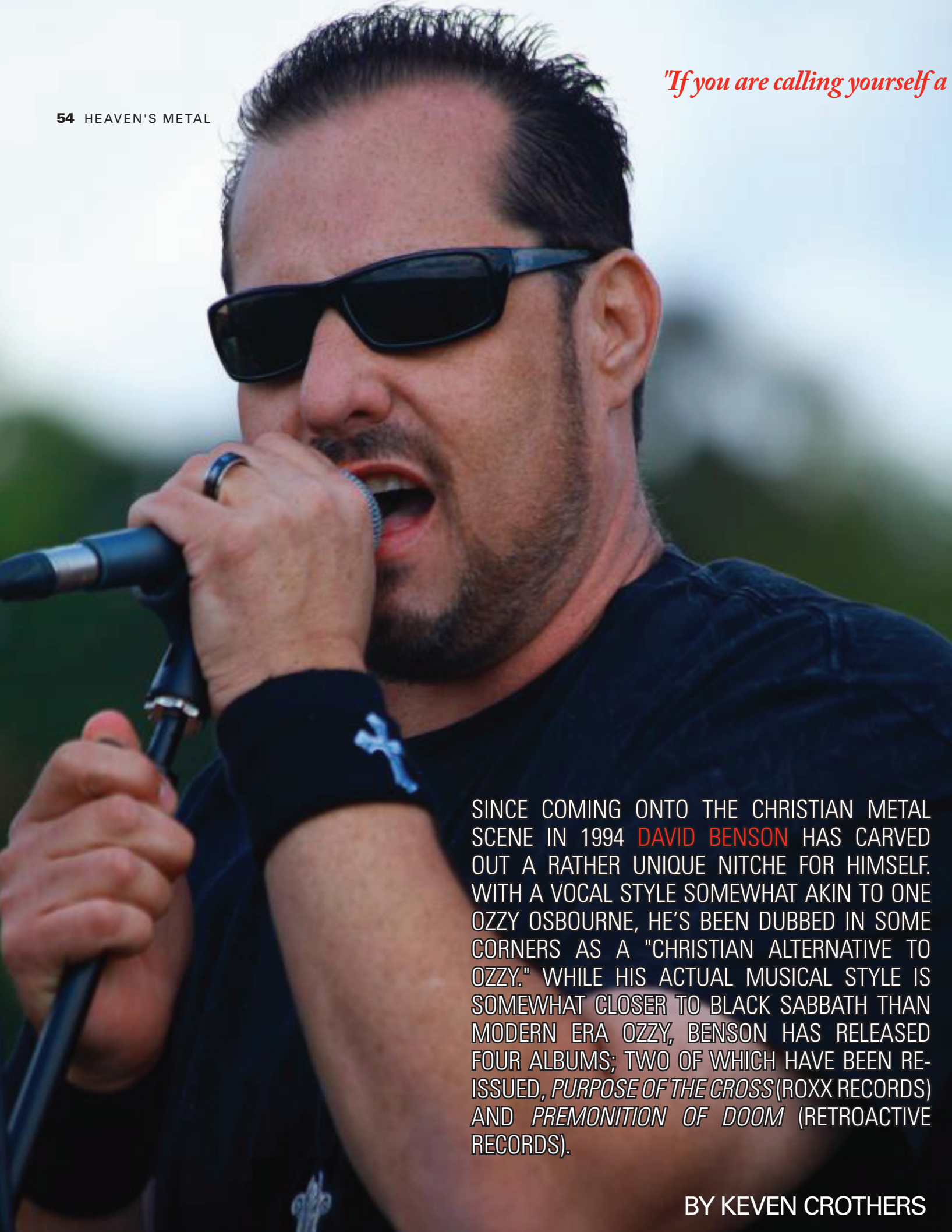
Your latest CD was put out on the band's own independent label, correct? Why did you choose to go that route, rather than shop for a label?
Yes, we released our album on our own independent label, Mathco Records, which was started by guitarist Dennis Mathis II. We decided to go this route for a few reasons. I had shopped around for labels and was told that we needed to have an album out first, as we only had rough demos at that time. Plus, at the time, hardly anyone knew about Rizin, so it was hard to generate any interest in us. We decided to start our own label and release our first album on it. Dennis is the business guy in the band, so he handles that area and he created the label. We'd love to represent a big label and will be looking for a good label to sign with in the near future.

Independent labels seem to be the wave of the future, even with well-known bands going the route of self-releasing music. How do you feel about the modern trend to download and steal music from the internet, as opposed to legally purchasing music?
We are against piracy and illegal downloading. Most people do not understand the amount of time, money, and energy that goes into making music and movies. They don't understand that for musicians, actors, etc., that this is our jobs. This is our livelihood. It's a shame that some artists have to make their sole living by touring, because sales are too low due to illegal downloading. If an artist chooses to give away stuff for free, then that is their choice. We've done it before, and will do it again. But, people really should support the bands they listen to by doing the right thing and purchasing the music legally. That is what a true fan does.

HEAVENS METAL

BY SCOTT WATERS

'If you are calling yourself a



SINCE COMING ONTO THE CHRISTIAN METAL SCENE IN 1994 DAVID BENSON HAS CARVED OUT A RATHER UNIQUE NITCHE FOR HIMSELF. WITH A VOCAL STYLE SOMEWHAT AKIN TO ONE OZZY OSBOURNE, HE'S BEEN DUBBED IN SOME CORNERS AS A "CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE TO OZZY." WHILE HIS ACTUAL MUSICAL STYLE IS SOMEWHAT CLOSER TO BLACK SABBATH THAN MODERN ERA OZZY, BENSON HAS RELEASED FOUR ALBUMS; TWO OF WHICH HAVE BEEN RE-ISSUED, *PURPOSE OF THE CROSS* (ROXX RECORDS) AND *PREMONITION OF DOOM* (RETROACTIVE RECORDS).

BY KEVEN CROTHERS

Christian Band and your choosing to have that label, you can't just be a silent in a band..."

Recently we had an opportunity to speak with David about his musical musings, his involvement in the Christian Metal Scene and his pairing with Place of Skulls guitarist Victor Griffin. Here is the transcript of that interview.

You've been posting on Facebook about a collaboration with Victor Griffin. Elaborate on what this collaboration is. Is this a brand new David Benson album? If so, who else will be playing on it? How did you come in contact with Victor and describe your relationship with him.
At this point it is just a David Benson album. But, with that being said, it could form into being more than just a David Benson album. Victor and I have had conversations about something more than just that.

The new album features Victor Griffin (guitars), Russell Lee (drums) and Dan Lively (bass). Bob Moore will be co-producing, mixing and engineering.

It has been quite a while since you've released a full album of new material... Have you been performing live? What have you been doing with yourself? Family, music, church ministry?
Well, I released a live album in 2010 called *Unleashed In Europe*, which was mixed by Grammy Award winning producer Neil Kernon. Family is great. I got married a little over a year ago. Everything in church ministry, life is great and steadfast. It gets better every day. I have done some touring around Europe and have done some one off concerts in past years. This year looks like it is shaping up to be a very good year – with a new album and Victor agreeing to come on and do live dates ... things are going well.

You've had two of your albums re-issued, *Premonition of Doom* & *Purpose of the Cross*. Are you happy with the results of those reissues?
Yes, overall the labels did a great job in handling the releases and promotion of them.

Was there something you would've done differently?
I don't know if I would do anything differently.

What sort of feedback have you received?
I have received nothing but awesome feedback. The people that support what I do through music and in ministry of music are some of the coolest people in the world!

You've been called the "Christian alternative to Ozzy." How do respond to this?
It is okay by me.

At this point in your career do you find this something that is derogatory or a compliment?
I have been asked this many times in the past. I have to say it does not bother me in the least and I take it as a compliment.

You've been around the Christian metal scene for many years now and have seen many changes. What is your opinion of the health of our "scene." Is it healthy or in a state of decline?
I think, as far as a business and the business of selling Christian metal music, it is on the upswing. We have never had the distribution opportunities as we have now.

What is the main enemy that is eating away at our scene?
First and foremost: lack of discipleship, good intentions, lack of knowledge of why we're really doing what were doing. It's a calling – not just a business – that is driven by the Great Commission.

Do you view yourself as a musician or a minister? What do you think of the debate of Christian band vs. Christians in a band…?
To me I think this is a bit of a cop out and oxymoron. If you are calling yourself a Christian band and you're choosing to have that label, you can't just be a silent in a band... I think it is your obligation as a Christian first and foremost (forget the music side of it) to deliver the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) and use your talents for Him! And, if you're in a Christian Band, it is even more incumbent on you.

On the album *Purpose of the Cross* your song "America Wake Up" almost sounds like a political call. Was that your intent?
It is a call to repentance to America. It was written during the Clinton Administration, but it is just as relevant today as it was then in today's political climate.

Do you have a favorite Christian artist that you enjoy listening to, musically?
I listen to a variety of different styles of music... It could span Mylon and Broken Heart, to Stryper to Place of Skulls to Degarmo and Key to Rob Cassels to Rez Band to Matthew Ward.

How did you come to know the Lord?
I accepted the Lord at a revival at my church when I was 10 years old. Jesse Powers was preaching the revival!

Is there anything you'd like to share specifically to the *Heaven's Metal* readers?
I would like to say thanks to all the people who have and continue to support what I do in this music and ministry. Also, be on the lookout for the release of the new album Victor Griffin and I are almost finished with. If you are a part of a ministry, club, promoter or organization that would love to book us on our upcoming tour ... Please just e-mail us at davidbensonbooking@live.com and we will contact you with details on how to make this happen. See you on the road around the world. God Bless.

In-Graved

GETTING THE HELL OUT OF METAL

In case you haven't heard, IN-GRAVED, is an exciting new band led by former Pentagram and Place of Skulls guitarist Victor Griffin. The band will release its self-titled debut album in Europe on Friday, March 22 via Finnish label Svart Records and in the U.S. on Tuesday, March 26 through Veritas Vinyl. The band lineup features Griffin, Trouble's original drummer Jeff "Oly" Olson on Hammond organ(!), drummer Pete Campbell (60 Watt Shaman, Place of Skulls), and bassist Guy Pinhas (The Obsessed, Acid King, Goatsnake) with guest appearances on the album by bassists Ron Holzner (Trouble, Earthen Grave, Debris Inc), Greg Turley (Pentagram), Marty Swaney (Death Row, Pentagram), Dan Lively (Sweet Cicada), Anne Griffin, and keyboardist Mike Puleo (Orodruin).

Victor kindly took the time to talk to us for the following interview about what's keeping him busy now.

If you had to boil down your mindset, attitude or theme of thought going into the making of this album, this band project, what would that be?
To do an album with no preconceived labels on the theme or the sound. I wanted to get back to the basics in a way … a more blues-based hard rock feel to the music. Not just simply pegged as doom metal.

How did you connect with the musicians for this project?
Pete Campbell and I go back a few years. I first met Pete when he was suggested to fill in on a Place of Skulls tour back in 2005 when Tim, our drummer at the time, couldn't make it for personal reasons. So, we flew Pete down a few days before the tour started and worked him in. Later on Tim came back to the band. But then in 2011, a similar situation happened again, and I called on Pete. This time we had, like, one day to prepare! So he came down, we rehearsed one day and flew off to Europe to do the tour. We've been loosely planning on something together ever since, we just didn't know what. So while Place of Skulls was dissolving and I could see the time coming when I'd be leaving Pentagram … we started thinking about getting the new stuff recorded. So, we booked some studio time, he came down to Knoxville and we worked out the material and laid down the basic tracks.

We didn't really have any prospects for a bass player, so we sent out a mass email to all these guys I've either played with at some point, or had just gotten to know over the years. Dan Lively, Ron Holzner, Guy Pinhas, of course my nephew Greg Turley, and Marty Swaney. A pretty heavy list of players! My wife Anne plays on a song, too. She's a great bass player … and I don't mean just ride the E string kinda stuff, either. She lays it down like Marty does, man. Full-on playing with the fingers and a very aggressive attack on the strings. She's been playing for something like 30 years. So, that was cool.

So, all these guys were into it. We sent out the individual tracks, they sent them back, and we

BY DOUG VAN PELT

dropped them in the mix at the studio. And then there's Oly on keyboard! But first Mike Puleo laid down some great keys on three songs. Our original intention was to do the whole album with him, but he ran into some schedule conflicts and couldn't finish it. So someone suggested Oly … and I didn't even know he played keys. We got in touch with a couple of emails and he was into it. Once we started getting down the direction the material was going … he really started laying down some killer stuff.

Man, I'm just really excited about this whole thing. All these great players have brought so much character to the album. And I think it really transcends the strictly "doom metal" label I'm usually pegged with. I call it a blues-based, hard rock album with some doom metal overtones.

How did your life change in such a way as to record music with the messages on this album? What's your story?
I've really been writing similar messages for 12 or 13 years, or more now. Sometimes more ambiguous than others, but like on the last Place of Skulls album, "As A Dog Returns"… I had a lot of personal issues to resolve and a lot of people from the secular fanbase took the lyrics on that album as an insult to their personal beliefs. But that's okay … I don't mind people disliking me for believing God instead of trusting in man's quote/unquote wisdom. It was an album I had to write for my own sanity.

Around 2006, I fell into such darkness and deception and sin that five years earlier, I would never have dreamed I'd find myself in. But if you put it in the context of, say, a war between the spirit and the flesh – it's like two animals – whichever one you feed the most will grow the strongest. And I was definitely feeding the flesh way more than the spirit. So, it was really only a matter of time before I fell. I won't go into the whole account of my failures and spiritual healing to stay on point... But it's been a long road towards any semblance of healing. So on this album, I wanted to continue further into the blues-based feel in the music … but that doesn't negate in any way the lyrics that were on "Dog Returns." It's like I've said before when people say they wish I'd do something more like the first Pentagram or the first Place of Skulls album. I simply don't want to strive to recreate what we just did on a prior album. I mean, it's cool that people love those albums … but frankly, I'd feel pretty depressed if all I could ever do was continue putting out basically the same album over and over.

But anyway, I haven't backed off my Christian belief whatsoever. If anything, the past five years have made me grow stronger in faith. I just want to continue to reach out to more people with a caring attitude, and have them know that someone understands their circumstances, their trials and struggles. For them to know they don't have to go it alone unless they choose to. But as far as the messages go on the In-Graved album, I think this is a very listenable album for just about anyone – as long as you have a taste for hard rock of any kind. What I mean is any specific genre of hard rock.

Other than that, my story is pretty simple. I've found forgiveness for my past, peace for the present, and hope for the future. And, like I heard Johnny Cash say one time, "sometimes that peace is hard to hold on to, but there's a joy knowing it's there that goes beyond all understanding." The more people I talk to, the more it seems that it's personal peace that people are missing more than anything.

How was it working with Travis Wyrick?
I've worked with Travis for about 12 years now – on everything from the Place of Skulls catalogue to the last Pentagram album, to the new In-Graved album. So, we have a pretty good history together. His studio has grown by leaps and bounds since 1999. He's gone from being a local Knoxville musician and recording local bands, to winning 4 or 5 Dove Awards and several nominations for Grammy's, to working with some of the biggest names in music. He's a great coach in the studio, too … the kinda guy that won't let it just be "good enough." He pushes you to a better performance and, when you're finished, you actually walk away a better musician. There've been times when he literally pissed me off by saying, "Try that again." But most of the time I was glad in the end. He's a great friend, too. He's often had my back during some dark times, and I'd do the same for him.

I see you're playing the Roadburn Festival in April. What other live music/touring plans do you have for In-Graved? What do you think your live show will be like?
We're playing several other European festivals and shows around Roadburn, and working on some North American dates for May and June. Then we'll probably be hitting Europe again in the fall. No idea how the live show will actually turn out, but these guys are all more-than-capable musicians, so I think we all have high expectations – to say the least. Pete and I have a good chemistry on stage and we're really looking forward to Oly bringing the keyboard element to it. With Guy on bass, the full lineup has a ton of combined stage experience. So yeah, we have high expectations and, really, I don't think any of us are too worried about it. We'll just do what we do.

What are your thoughts behind the band name, In-Graved?
I was kicking around a short list of names and In-Graved kept coming to the top. I happened to see or hear the word engraved one day and it just kinda stuck with me. So, I kept thinking on it and came up with the alternate spelling. Think in terms of death and how we return to dust or, in the same sense, to the grave. Then I related that to a deeper meaning when I remembered what Jesus said about a self-centered man. Loosely paraphrased, He said, "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will save it." So I applied that somewhat in simpler terms to the spelling and definition of In-Graved – meaning to die to the selfish desires of the flesh.

What are your favorite song lyrics on the new album? Why?
Probably "Thorn In The Flesh." I relate strongly to the feelings of inner turmoil and afflictions of the spirit and soul. I think I've always had this kind of hypersensitivity to the spiritual. Not in a cultic or mystical sense. I just mean an awareness of our own bodily makeup of spirits and souls, and the significance of it. When we're left to our own devices, we can tend to get very prideful in our accomplishments. Same as Paul was afflicted with a "thorn in the flesh," and prayed for God to remove it … God wouldn't do it. God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." That made Paul able to understand how his affliction was a good thing for holding his pride and ego down to keep him from getting conceited and arrogant about the blessings in his life.

If you didn't have music to express yourself with, what other artistic or expressive medium do you think you'd use? Why?
I used to think if it wasn't for music, I wouldn't have much of a voice or outlet. But that's really not so. Obviously, music potentially offers a broader range for having your voice heard. But we all have circles where our voices can be heard. It's not the size of the circle that matters, but the significance of what you have to say. I've been blessed to have people tell me face to face, or email to tell me how much a certain song meant to them when they were going through a difficult time. I always tell those people if they were the only one in the world that one of my songs had impacted like that – they were worth it. It encourages me to hear their story. But regardless, we all have a voice and a responsibility to share our gifts and talents. They're all equally important.

What is a deep-seated fear that you've identified and overcome in your life? How did you do that?
The biggest fear I've ever had was the fear of losing my salvation and soul. If you need this interview to be long enough to fill your whole magazine, I can tell you about it. It's not simple and it's nothing I'd ever wish on anybody. How did I overcome it? The question should be: "How am I overcoming it?" And all I can tell you is I'm still standing. God's Word says to, "take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." I also have an incredibly supportive wife and friends. But the most important thing is to daily take up His Word in Scripture and simply stand.

What would you list as essential gear for your musical performance? Why?
My '86 Les Paul Standard, Voodoo Amp modified Laney GH100 heads, Fender Showman 4x12 speaker cabinets, and a few pedals for accents. That's about it. That's been my setup for the past 7 or 8 years or so. I'm always trying to improve my tone, but those are the basics.

Anything else you'd like to add?
Just thanks, man. I appreciate everyone's time and support. Just don't get too busy to think about life after death until there's no time left.

HEAVENS METAL

Golden R

Many cultures are isolated to just one nation or people group. Not so with the heavy metal subculture. The language of metal transcends international boundaries and speaks to people just like you and me all over the world. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a land such as Sweden would produce so many great Christian metal bands – from the early days of the metal missionary movement in the late '70s with Jerusalem, right up to the present. Christian Liljegren is a man familiar to many of us, because he has been the voice of many of these Swedish bands in the past 20 years, and his record label (with its ever changing name) is home to many more. All has been quiet from Christian for the last two years, so now that neo-classical melodic metal band Golden Resurrection has just released its new album *One Voice for the Kingdom*, now is the perfect time to find out what our man Christian has been up to.

Christian, we've not heard from you in a little while. Welcome back! Can you tell us a little about the state of your record company, first of all?
Christian Liljegren: Thank you for your warm welcome back, Chris. It has been very hectic over the last years since 2011 reforming Liljegren Records into a bigger record label group called Doolittle Group. On Doolittle we have several labels in the group: Soulscape, Liljegren, Feedback and Doolittle, where we release all types of music, but a big majority is based on the harder side. We also work with secular bands as well that we like and most of the Christian bands are released on Liljegren Records label. It is much, much harder to run a label these days, but still I have the passion for it and, of course, to find good new Christian bands and with lots of support from my colleagues and partners, Niclas and Frippe Eliasson. We have stronger impact and structure than I had when I ran my label alone.

What bands will have new albums out in 2013 on Liljegren Records?
So far the release plan look like this:

January/February
Golden Resurrection – *One Voice For the Kingdom*
Lancer – S/T
Black Rose – *Turn On The Night*
No Possession Blues – S/T

March/April
Shadows Past – *Perfect Chapter*
My Endless Wishes – S/T

June
Metal For Jesus – A compilation CD with great songs we have released during the years and a good introduction to Christian metal. It will be in co-operation with Johannes Jonsson – one of the main persons for Christian metal ministry in Sweden who runs the Metal Bible and Metal Community (and contributes to *Heaven's Metal*).

August/ September
ReinXeed – *A New World*
Swedish Hitz Goes Metal Volume Two

September/October
Eclipse – *The Truth and a Little More* re-release with bonus disc
Eclipse – *Second To None* re-release with bonus disc
Spellbound – *Breaking The Spell* re-release with bonus material
Spellbound – *Rocking Reckless* re-release with bonus material

Plus some more new CDs not confirmed yet. The year will be exciting.

As a side note, for those of us that live outside Europe, where are some sources to buy music from your various bands?
You can buy it on Amazon.com, easy – both physical and digital – but if you want to support the bands and our label, you can buy a lot of CDs and cool merchandise at our store (doolittle.bigcartel.com)

On to Golden Resurrection. Your new album *One Voice for the Kingdom* is available now. What can we expect from album #3? What message do you have for the world with this release? And are you touring with this lineup?
The new GR album is more direct and more neoclassical metal than the previous album, *Man With A Mission*. What we wanted was to create a sound that is similar to how we sound live and not so many overdubs. I am sure many Narnia fans will love it, as I am huge fan of the style we had on the first two Narnia albums *Awakening* and *Long Live The King*. The main message was to show the world that we in GR band's 5 individual members are different with unique gifts, blended together to become *One Voice For The Kingdom* and to bring a heavenly hope in this quite rough and tough world we live in. We will be doing concerts here and

Photo: Andre Karjel

Resurrection

GOD'S METAL WARRIORS

there as all of us are, except me, occupied in other bands and projects besides Golden Resurrection. It would be great to come to the U.S..

Christian, you always seem to be involved in so much musically all at once. What is your motivation behind being so busy? I know that here many full-time musicians will be in two or three bands at once, hoping that one will be successful so that it might pay the bills. Is it like that for you, or do you have a need for many different musical outlets, or is it something else entirely?
I have had so much music inside and also I am a big music collector – from symphonic rock to metal – and love to express and create different styles in music and also with my vocals. I am very happy for the symphonic rock album with Flagship. I love many of the Divinefire songs. For me it has always been a way to express my faith and my passion for music and I am proud for the 22-23 albums I have released since 1994 when the debut album with Modest Attraction came and before that I released two vinyl singles with Borderline. To make it go 'round financially is important and I am very happy and blessed that lots of music fans like myself have bought the albums and still do.

Will AudioVision and Divinefire see the light of day again? How about Narnia? Are they done for good?
I will never say never to any band I have been involved in if the time is right, but my time is limited as my work for DOT Music with management / concert bookings and to be label manager for Doolittle Group occupies a lot of my time. The bands and music media people often ask if me and CJ Grimmark will do a reunion with Narnia again. All I can say is that CJ is busy with his new recordings and I have Golden Resurrection, but we are in touch from time to time. You never know...

Some of Christian metal's pioneers hail from Sweden. I'm thinking specifically of Jerusalem and Leviticus. Do you have any kind of relationship with them and have you ever considered working with them on music?
I have good contact with members from both Jerusalem and Leviticus and especially Leviticus was a major influence for me. My favorite albums are Leviticus guitarist Bjorn Stigsson's solo album *Together With Friends* (1987) and the Elefante produced album *Knights Of Heaven* (1989). We did with Narnia a version of Jerusalem´s "In His Majesty's Service" on actually the last studio recording I did with Narnia. I have a big respect for Ulf Christiansson and Bjorn Stigsson – the band leaders of these Christian metal pioneers and Ulf Christiansson has one of the best rock voices I know and it is still in good shape even now that Ulf is past his 60th birthday. Impressive!

When you are out touring in Sweden or elsewhere, how do the audiences for melodic metal music look to you? How does the CD buying market look? (I mean, in your opinion, what is the state of affairs for melodic metal music right now?)
The GR audience are between 20 - 65 years old and most of them are about my age and I am now 42 years old and they bring their sons and daughters to our concerts. We also have younger fans as GR guitarist Tommy ReinXeed is 25 years old and Alfred Fridhagen, our drummer, is only 19 years old. We still sell a good amount CDs and T-shirts at our concerts and if you don´t tour you don´t sell at all. We in GR have a good position in Japan, so we sell several thousands of physical CDs there and in Europe/USA it is okay. I know we have a lot of fans in South America, but the sales are poor. I am sure we are bootlegged. All in all, you can sell a good amount of albums if you are working hard with the product, but you need to tour, otherwise the sales will be poor.

What inspires you and keeps you going?
Still my passion for music is a driving force and, along with that, I want to share my biggest treasure – what Jesus is for me and can be for you. He is everything to me and without Him I am nothing!

Anything else you want to add or promote?
I really want to play in the USA. We never did it with Narnia and I have gotten such great feedback from the fans during the years and when I have toured and played with great Christian bands such as Stryper, Bloodgood and Whitecross. They always say "Christian, you have to come to the U.S. and light the fire for metal there." I say, "If it is God´s will I´ll go, I love to rock the world for Christ!" Again thank you so much for your love, support and prayers. Long Live The King!

Thanks, Christian and greetings from Christian headbangers in the USA!

HEAVENS METAL

BY CHRIS GATTO

BAND NAMES THAT ARE MADE UP OF THE LAST NAMES OF THE MUSICIANS IN THE BAND USUALLY TELL YOU ONE OF TWO THINGS: A) THE MUSICIANS ARE EGOTISTICAL (NOT THE CASE HERE) OR B) THE MUSICIANS ARE OF SUCH A HIGH CALIBER AND THEY HAVE SUCH A SIGNATURE SOUND THAT THEIR NAME ON THE ALBUM IS A PROMISE OF WHAT THE LISTENER MAY EXPECT TO HEAR. THUS THE APPROPRIATELY NAMED RIVERA BOMMA IS THE BRAINCHILD OF PHENOMENAL VOCALIST JOHNNY BOMMA, WHO ONCE SANG FOR UNDERGROUND THRASH LEGENDS HADES, AND AXEMAN ROD RIVERA, WHO BRINGS TO THE TABLE THE SKILLS AND STYLES OF BOTH RITCHIE BLACKMORE AND CARLOS SANTANA. I HAD THE PLEASURE OF BECOMING FRIENDS WITH THIS NEW JERSEY PAIR WHEN I INTERVIEWED THEM FOR MY OWN (NOW DEFUNCT) MAGAZINE TEN YEARS AGO AND HAVE FOLLOWED THEIR MELODIC METAL CAREER EVER SINCE. THE BAND HAS ALWAYS FOCUSED ON QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY, THUS THE RELEASE OF *INFINITE JOURNEY OF SOUL* ON RETROACTIVE RECORDS MARKS ONLY THEIR 3RD CD SINCE THE BAND BEGAN IN 2000. LISTEN IN AS I GET THE SCOOP FROM THE JERSEY BOYZ...

BY CHRIS GATTO

I've been thoroughly immersing myself in your new album *Infinite Journey of Soul* and the most obvious question is: Where have you guys been for the last 7 years since *I Am God*?
Rod: We promoted *I am God* for about 2 1/2 years. After that we encountered life and health issues and, of course, all the good ups and many downs of the music biz. But we are glad that we are back in action and, finally, *Infinite Journey of Soul* is released. "Good things come to those who wait!!"

The band this time consists of Johnny on vocals and Rod on guitars, obviously, but this time you have Mike LePond of Symphony X on bass and Ed Faust from the first album back on drums? And Steve Riker only playing on "Via Dolorosa?" Is there a story behind Mike LePond joining the band? And what is Mr. Taz Robles up to these days? Did he go back to Pacto de Sangre in PR?
Rod: Mike LePond was only going to play a couple of songs on *I.J.O.S.*. We had a great time recording and hanging out. Mike is a sweetheart of a guy; plus an a amazing player, so we asked him to play on all the songs and also to play live with us when he is not on tour with Symphony X. So yes, Mike is the new bass player of Rivera Bomma. Taz did go back to Puerto Rico and is playing with his original band, Pacto de Sangre.

I know I've heard you guys do your version of "Via Dolorosa" before, so I assumed it was also on *I Am God*, but when I went back and checked, that wasn't the case. Did I hear you play the song live? It seems a strange choice for a metal band to do a cover of, although Johnny really does it justice. How was it selected for the album?
Johnny: We recorded this song while recording *I Am God*, but we decided to wait to put it out. And yes, we have been performing the song live ever since the recording. It was a nice fit for this CD. The song is very personal for Rod and I. His mom suggested we do it.

And lest our readers think you've gone soft, "Via Dolorosa" is bookended by some of your heaviest material. Do you think power metal and progressive metal share the same audience, or are they different? Does having Mike from prog metal giants Symphony X (I see them play every time they hit Philly) steer R/B in a different direction?
Rod: Not really. We had all the songs written before Mike joined the band. But his playing puts that progressive spark in the mix.

"In My Dreams" is the other – dare I say – non-metal song on the album, showcasing Rod's Latin guitar sounds. Was there a conscious effort to present a heavier album this time? If so, you did a good job of it.
Johnny: Thank you so much, Chris. Yes, we decided we wanted to go much heavier this CD. Headbanging if you will. (laughs) And with that in mind, we wrote the lyrics to match the heavy vibe. Very dark stuff that most folks don't like talking about. This comes from my experience as a counselor. And all the dark things I've seen ... and always encouraging these people in the grace of Jesus.

There are 3 albums in your catalog, but this is the first time you've had a US record label (Retroactive Records). What's the story behind that change? Are you guys marketing yourself more for a domestic audience this time around? Does that say anything about the American metal market these days? Where is your biggest fan base now?
Johnny: We are very grateful for the success we have achieved overseas! And I would say that's where our fan base is, but we decided, to focus a little more on the States by bringing old metal back ... with a message of love. We put two contemporary songs on the CD, to show metal dudes have a softer side as well.

Uh, oh. Cue up the tv commercial for the best of hair metal ballads and get out your lighters (laughs). Are you guys planning on doing shows for this album? Any plans for new Rivera/Bomma shirts or merch? Have you ever thought of doing any songs in Spanish – especially for the Central and South American countries?
Rod: Yes, our booking agent is currently booking tour dates in the U.S., Europe & Latin America. We will also sell exclusive Rivera Bomma merch on tour.

Ten years ago we had a lengthy interview and were talking about how, at the time, metal was still in decline. In ten years that has changed drastically. What has caused that turnaround, in your opinion(s)?
Rod: In America hard rock and metal is a bit more popular than it has been since the '80s. But that's mainly with bands that were popular back then. But it's great to see the U.S. wake up, per se. But metal in the U.S. is still not as popular as it is in Europe, Japan or Latin America, specially for bands like us.

Having something of the blessing/curse of being a perfectionist myself... I know this is a loaded question, but are you satisfied with how the new album turned out, or would you change things given the chance?
Rod: We greatly appreciate the positive attention it's getting worldwide. Sure, we would want to tweak things after listening to a song that has already been released. I am never completely satisfied – you can always make things better – but, overall we are really happy with the outcome of the album, especially with this one more than our previous ones.

Johnny, I recall hearing about how you lost your voice back when you were singing for Hades and then regained it. Can you talk a bit about that?
Johnny: Yes, when I was singing with them I was doing things to my voice that weren't natural and without training. This was all my fault, but by doing so I destroyed my voice. I developed polyps on my vocal cords. I had surgery on them. I was told I would never sing again. And possibly never have a complete talking voice. Well, long story short, by the grace of God and intense therapy/vocal training for three years, I was able to start singing one song a week, lose it for two weeks and start all over again. Until boom ... I received this voice. Now I'm very grateful and I will never jeopardize the gift God has given me.

Johnny and Rod, both of you are very talented. I'm proud of you and I know God has called you to this ministry. What is the primary message you want to be heard through R/B?
Johnny: God Bless you, Chris, for all your support over the years. We are so appreciative of you and *HM/Heaven's Metal*. The message we want to send is a simple one: That God loves the person right where they are – no matter how much sin and crap is in their life. If they would recognize that, they would live in peace through the passion of Jesus ... and ask Him in their hearts. They will see a major transformation in their life ... and will spend eternity with God. It's all about the love and grace of our Lord Jesus. "Be still and know that I am God." Psalms 46:10

Rod: Well, I guess after that, I'll be "Gene Simmons" (laughs). Be sure to check us out at Facebook.com/rivera.bomma

You can also preview, buy the album and mp3s at CDbaby/cd/riverabomba

And finally ... check out our new video and single at Youtube.com/watch?v=nevmUs1Ykpo

Thank you all so much for your support. We hope to see you in a town near you soon. Blessings and always rock & roll.

ALBUM REVIEWS

STRYPER
SECOND COMING
It seems all of the bands are doing it – and now Stryper has joined the ranks of bands that have re-recorded basically a greatest hits album of their songs using modern technology. Tracks 1-14 are some of their best songs pulled from their first three releases, beefed up greatly with modern technology. Gone is the thinness of the '80s sound, giving a much fuller feel. While some purists would have preferred a remix over a re-record, this is still an amazing project. To sweeten the deal, they have also included two brand new tracks just for this release. "Bleeding from the Inside Out" is a great rocker that feels a bit like something from the *Reborn* album era, while "Blackened" is a faster-paced heavy hitter with a little more of the traditional Stryper layered background vocals feel. Both are great additions to whet our appetites for a future full release, though they stand out a bit against the '80s feel of the rest of the album. [Frontier] Jeff McCormack

RIZIN
IN RUINS
In Ruins is the full-length demo from recently-formed AZ metal band Rizin. Production values aside, the demo gives a glimpse into what we might expect from the band down the road. Rizin is hard to pin down, being influenced by '80s thrash and classic metal, '90s groove metal, with a heavy doom vibe reminiscent of Place of Skulls. The lyrics are dark and well written, especially on "Tetelestai." The band plays together pretty solid (instrumental "This Present Darkness" is good). However, the vocals dim the full effect for me. The singer employs several different vocal styles, but seems to lack some of the confidence and strength behind the mic that only experience can bring. Nice first try, guys. Keep on rocking! [Rizin] Chris Gatto

GRAVE FORSAKEN
REAP WHAT YOU SOW
This is the Australian band's fifth full-length studio effort and ninth overall (including demos, EPs and a live release). Although we find more thrash metal that the band is known for, the opening microtonal (and at times atonal) violin part signal something's different. But is it for better or worse? Lyrically, the band have grown considerably, tackling societal injustice on multiple tracks, yet delving into much more personal fare on songs like "Coming Home." Musically, aside from the poorly executed violin parts, there is not a lot of new ground here. In a band that's been churning out tunes as long as Grave Forsaken has, I'm starting to a expect a bit more, so I was slightly let down with this release. Additionally, the production on this release is a bit muddy. While one certainly wouldn't expect a thrash release to be over-produced, *Reap* suffers from the opposite problem. Having said all that, fans of the classic thrash sound won't be disappointed necessarily, particularly if this is your first exposure to Grave Forsaken. Furthermore, it's great to see them branching out lyrically in a genre that's not always known for theological depth.
[Soundmass] Loyd Harp

GLASS HAMMER
PERILOUS
Listeners journey through the gate of death and beyond in *Perilous*, the newest release from prog-rock masters Glass Hammer, and their third consecutive album to feature Steve Babb, Fred Schendel (both founding members), Kamran Alan Shikoh, and Jon Davison (who is also the current front-man for YES). *Perilous* is split into 13 tracks, though it is meant as one long piece of music that feels more like an opera; in fact, the beginning of the first track, "The Sunset Gate," sounds like an overture, presenting the listener with various melodies that appear later on. This is a quintessential progressive rock album, complete with classic, complex keyboard sounds and virtuosic guitar-work, along with Davison's brilliant vocals. Perilous also features The Adonia String Trio, The McCallie School Guitar Choir, The Chattanooga Girls Choir, and a Latin Choir. Find an hour to listen to *Perilous* in its entirety. Are you ready to go on the journey? [Arion] Sarah Brehm

NEAL MORSE
LIVE MOMENTUM
Some might ask or complain – "WHAT! Another monster-sized 5-disc live set?" Fans (like me) scream – "Yes!" The difference this time around? New album – new tour – new set list. I love the albums, but getting to experience the live show frequently like this is a blessing. Unlike some artists that continue to play mostly the same tracks show after show, Neal really mixes it up each time around, giving an amazing and fresh experience over and over. This 2-DVD/3-CD set captures the show in crystal clear video and high quality audio, and this time around is offered with a Blu-ray option. As a bonus, there is a 66-minute documentary on the DVD, too. As expected, Neal fronts a group of über-talented musicians, who translate his songs into live masterpieces that often stray from the recorded songs and delve into prog/improv craziness. Recorded live in October 2012 in New York, Neal, Randy George, Mike Portnoy, Adson SodreEric Gillett, and Bill Hubauer give us a high-definition audio/visual journey into musical greatness, as always. I never tire of watching this type of talent in songwriting and performance – keep it up Neal and crew! [Radiant] Jeff McCormack

BOARDERS
R-EXISTENCE
Hard-hitting metalcore pioneers are back after their return on 2011's *The Great Campaign of Sabotage*. This band, of course, has a rich history – both with Facedown, where they were one of the label's first signings, but also previously with two releases on Tooth and Nail/Solid State and also a spattering of EPs with notable underground hxc label Life Sentence. Thusly, new Overcome material is always met with a certain amount of anticipation. This can be a great thing for a band's legend/myth/cult status, but also a tough legacy to live up to. Fortunately, Overcome have never disappointed, but can they ever release *Immortal Until Their Work is Done* again? They've upped the metal ante in recent years – having formed as a fairly unconventional early '90s chugga-chugga hardcore – and fortunately this trend continues on this lengthy EP. At times vocalist Thomas Washington has a rasp that recalls Scott Angelacos (of the evilcore Bloodlet/Hope and Suicide), particularly on the title track, but as evidenced by the title of this album, Overcome's lyrical department shows a swift departure from that influence. Another highlight are the gang vocals on "Depredation of the Cherished," which recall Sleeping Giant and xDeathstarx. If you're a fan of Overcome, you probably already own this. If you are a metalhead who is sceptical about anything -core, this band could potentially convince you otherwise. [Roxx] Scott Waters

OVERCOME
NO RESERVES. NO RETREATS. NO REGRETS.
Hard-hitting metalcore pioneers are back after their return on 2011's *The Great Campaign of Sabotage*. This band, of course, has a rich history – both with Facedown, where they were one of the label's first signings, but also previously with two releases on Tooth and Nail/Solid State and also a spattering of EPs with notable underground hxc label Life Sentence. Thusly, new Overcome material is always met with a certain amount of anticipation. This can be a great thing for a band's legend/myth/cult status, but also a tough legacy to live up to. Fortunately, Overcome have never disappointed, but can they ever release *Immortal Until Their Work is Done* again? They've upped the metal

Surf this: stryper.com, reverbnation.com/rizin, soundmass.com, glasshammer.com, nealmorse.com, roxxproductions.com, facedownrecords.com, klanknation.com, facebook.com/stepcousin, absalonrising.wordpress.com

ante in recent years – having formed as a fairly unconventional early '90s chugga-chugga hardcore – and fortunately this trend continues on this lengthy EP. At times vocalist Thomas Washington has a rasp that recalls Scott Angelacos (of the evilcore Bloodlet/Hope and Suicide), particularly on the title track, but as evidenced by the title of this album, Overcome's lyrical department shows a swift departure from that influence. Another highlight are the gang vocals on "Depredation of the Cherished," which recall Sleeping Giant and xDeathstarx. If you're a fan of Overcome, you probably already own this. If you are a metalhead who is sceptical about anything -core, this band could potentially convince you otherwise. [Facedown] Loyd Harp

KLANK
URBAN WARFARE
It's been a lot of years since Klank's aggressive brand of industrial/nu metal has been in active circulation, and it's been sorely missed. Circle of Dust alumnus Daren "Klank" Diolosa put out *Still Suffering*, *The Downside* EP, and *Numb* between 1997-2000 and *Urban Warfare* marks his first all new studio album since that time. The new disc, boasting 14 songs with special guest Dug Pinnick on the closer, put out by the band itself and sold in cardboard sleeves, picks up largely where *Numb* left off. The mood is still dark in this guitar-heavy blender of Rammstein and Korn styled metal mayhem. The choruses tend to get a bit repetitive, but maybe that's why they end up stuck in my head over time. [SmokeDogg Productions] Chris Gatto

STEP COUSIN
EXPERIMENTS IN SOUND
Step Cousin are a heavy metal band formed by Kelly Matthews (Drums, Bass, Vocals) and Jeff Grady (Guitars) in Missouri, USA. Kelly and Jeff also make up the core of Lordchain. *Experiments in Sound* was the band's first full-length album, originally released in 2000 on the band's own Corduroy Records. The album was only pressed in limited quantities and was nearly impossible to find. Finally in December 2012, the album was remastered and finally re-released on CD with five bonus tracks. *Experiments in Sound* is more than just the title of this album, it's also a statement of what to expect. For the most part Step Cousin play their own brand of thrash metal fused with a lot of early death metal influences. In fact, at times the band reminds me of Mortification. As a matter of fact, "Raised from the Dead" and "Despise" both could have been recorded by Mortification. However, this band doesn't stick rigidly to this style and throw in plenty of surprises. Nothing is more of a surprise than a flute solo in the middle of opening track "Where the Door Leads." The song is a mid-paced number with heavy, crunchy guitars and the whimsy flute solo stands in stark contrast. As well, Kelly Matthews doesn't stick to any one style of vocals on this album. While the lion's share of the vocals are of the growled thrash metal variety, there are also clean vocals and even some hardcore-style shouts mixed in. "Slide the Wheel" opens with some clean vocals while "Take It All Away" starts off with guttural death vocals that later morph back into the thrash style then into some clean vocals during the chorus that almost sound out of place in this song. Of course this all falls under the banner of "experiments" in sound. The 2012 comes with a four page insert and has five bonus tracks. Though the insert isn't fancy, it does feature a song by song commentary by Kelly Matthews. [Corduroy] Scott Waters

ABSOLON
DARKNESS RISING
Never heard of Absolon? I hadn't either, but through the Christian Metal Realm I followed a couple of threads there and discovered that former Malachia/Vision vocalist Ken Pike was involved. Curiosity got the best of me and requested a copy of their debut CD, *Darkness Rising – The Tale of Derek Blackheart*. Ken had mentioned there had been some comparisons to Kamelot, so I was even more intrigued. Absolon is self described this way, "Absolon … is a symphonic/goth power metal outfit. Influenced by old school metal bands like Iron Maiden, Judas Priest and Queensryche; and the newer power metal bands like Kamelot, Epica and Nightwish. Absolon has brought together a blend of metal that will please old school/European metal heads and symphonic/goth metal fans. We just call it epic metal." *Darkness Rising: The Tale of Derek Blackheart* is a well-thought-out and extremely well-produced independent metal album. The songwriting is top-notch and the performances are exceptional. Honestly, I wasn't sure if this album was gonna grab me or not. This is a concept album – make no bones about it. The melodies here are soaring with plenty of superb guitar work courtesy of Ed Dumas. Grab is not the term to be used here, hook-in is! Concept albums don't often lend themselves to the simple verse-chorus-verse-chorus formula and this album is no different. Yet the melodies are hypnotic. Ken Pike never sounded better. Yes, there are moments where his tonality reminds you of Queensryche, but pay it never mind, that is how he sounds. Songs like "Pretender" and "Nail in the Head" is almost hypnotic, strong European power metal with driving rhythms and explosive lead work. Contrast that with songs like "Even Heroes Fall" – a bit of whimsy that exceeds in nuance and dynamics all the while moving the story of one Derek Blackheart's fall into a pit of despair. Wonderful keyboard stylings that expand the sound and add layers of depth, which enhances the overall mood and feel of this release; but don't worry – the crunch of the guitar is definitely the driving force. The lyrics tell the story of one Derek Blackheart, a kid who dreams of nothing more than being a heavy metal legend. The fable speaks of his ascendency and the emptiness that he realizes once he reaches the peak of his profession. This story ends badly, but not without a lot of introspection and questioning of the meaning of things. Based on the classic story *A Picture of Dorian Gray* with a modern interpretation, Absolon have scored a knockout. You won't find ten songs of Jesus saves. As a matter of fact, you won't find any direct mention of the Alpha and Omega. However, His presence is there by His absence, there are several slight allusions that scream out to me as I read the enclosed lyrics. Without a doubt this is a cautionary tale. "What is it worth to have fame and fortune only to lose your soul, Derek Blackheart?" This is art that can be enjoyed by anyone, much like a Christian painter who paints landscapes. Similarly, it reminds me of the old Rez Band tune "Tears in The Rain" from their *Hostage* album. *Darkness Rising: The Tale of Derek Blackheart* is a melodic bit of heavy metal whimsy that is lyrically original and musically superior. Fans of the aforementioned bands should really enjoy this. I know I am, which is why I'm swinging 8 axes at this album. [Absolon] Keven Crothers

Why this might be the last issue of HM Magazine that I publish.
I blew it. I knew better, but yet I still crossed the line. What did I do? Did it involve sex? Porn? Drugs? Money? No, it involved idolatry. I somehow put HM Magazine – its production, the day-in/day-out job duties and scrambling to keep it alive – above my family. It was a lot of work to keep this magazine going for 28 years. I threw myself into its survival like a man on a mission. I was on a mission – I wanted to change the world and make a lasting impact for Christ. I put my body through a wringer of exhausting and seemingly never-ending work ... and double-triple-quad-overtime. But I could take this. I knew when to push. But my family? They're fragile. They needed me. I pushed beyond what was healthy.

Now my life is not healthy. Now my life is not abundantly blessed. Now my life is in crisis. I want more than this. I want to be the man God wants me to be. I know He wants me to be there for my family. I'm going to stop running HM Magazine. I'm going to show the magazine who's boss. "I'm the master, not the slave. I'm getting rid of you."

The good news for you – the reader – is that HM Magazine might just well have sold into some new and caring hands by the time you read this. In that case, the timely and informed delivery of this hard music scene content will carry on. The language and culture of heavy metal, punk, alternative, indie, rock and roll – with a distinction and a connection to the great I Am – will hopefully be blessed in some form or another by a vehicle/publication known as HM Magazine.

If a sale doesn't take place, I can say with a clean conscience and a confidence that it's been a blessed and great ride. I have lived a dream come true and I've felt the pleasure of my heavenly Father. I lay it down in peace and thanksgiving. God has been gracious to me.

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